Until Death Do Us Part

13

FINAL

Story: Hiroshi Takashige

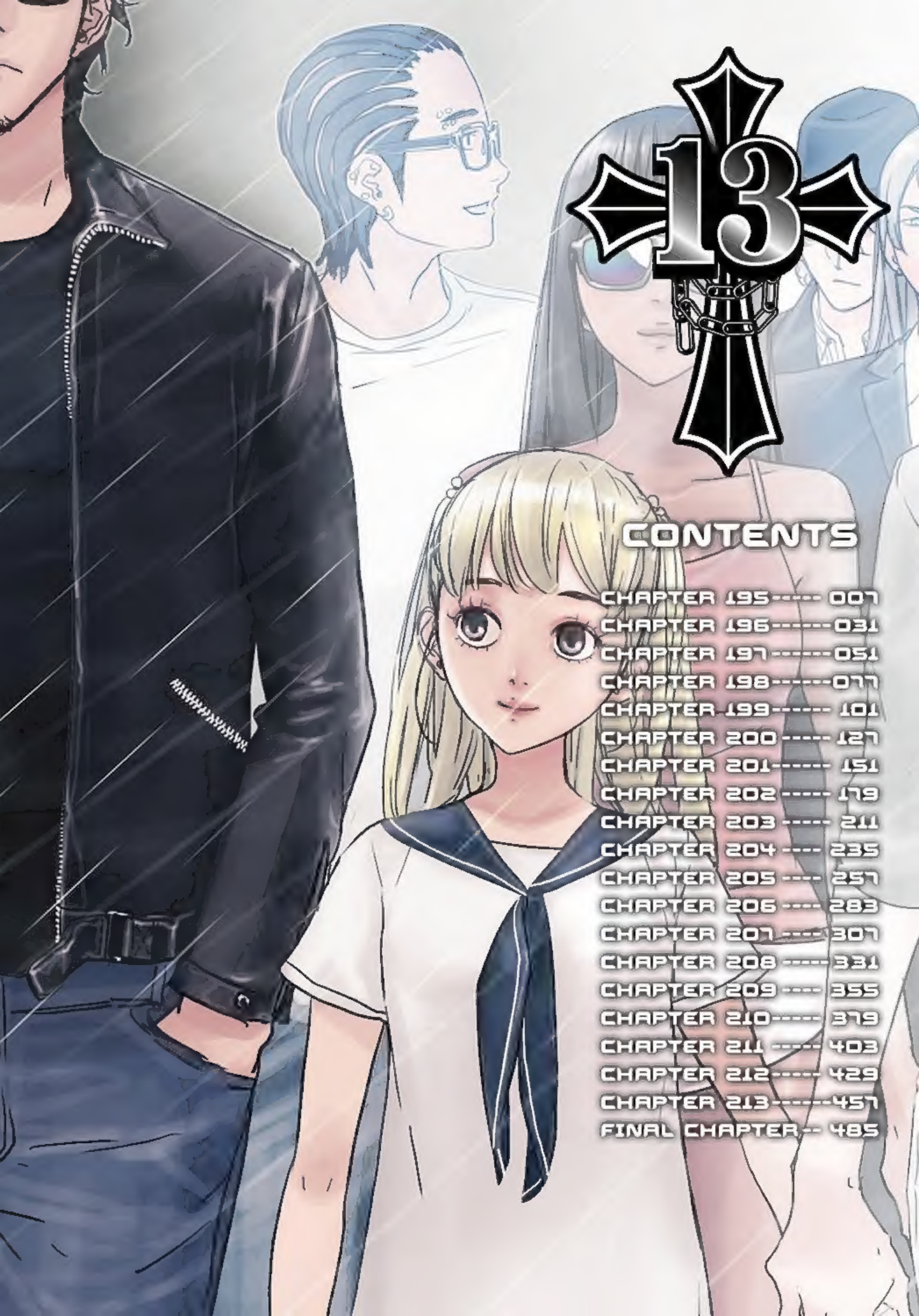
Art: DOUBLE-S

Until Death us Pa

Story: Hiroshi Takashige
Art: DOUBLE-S

Until Death
do us Part

Until Death do us Part



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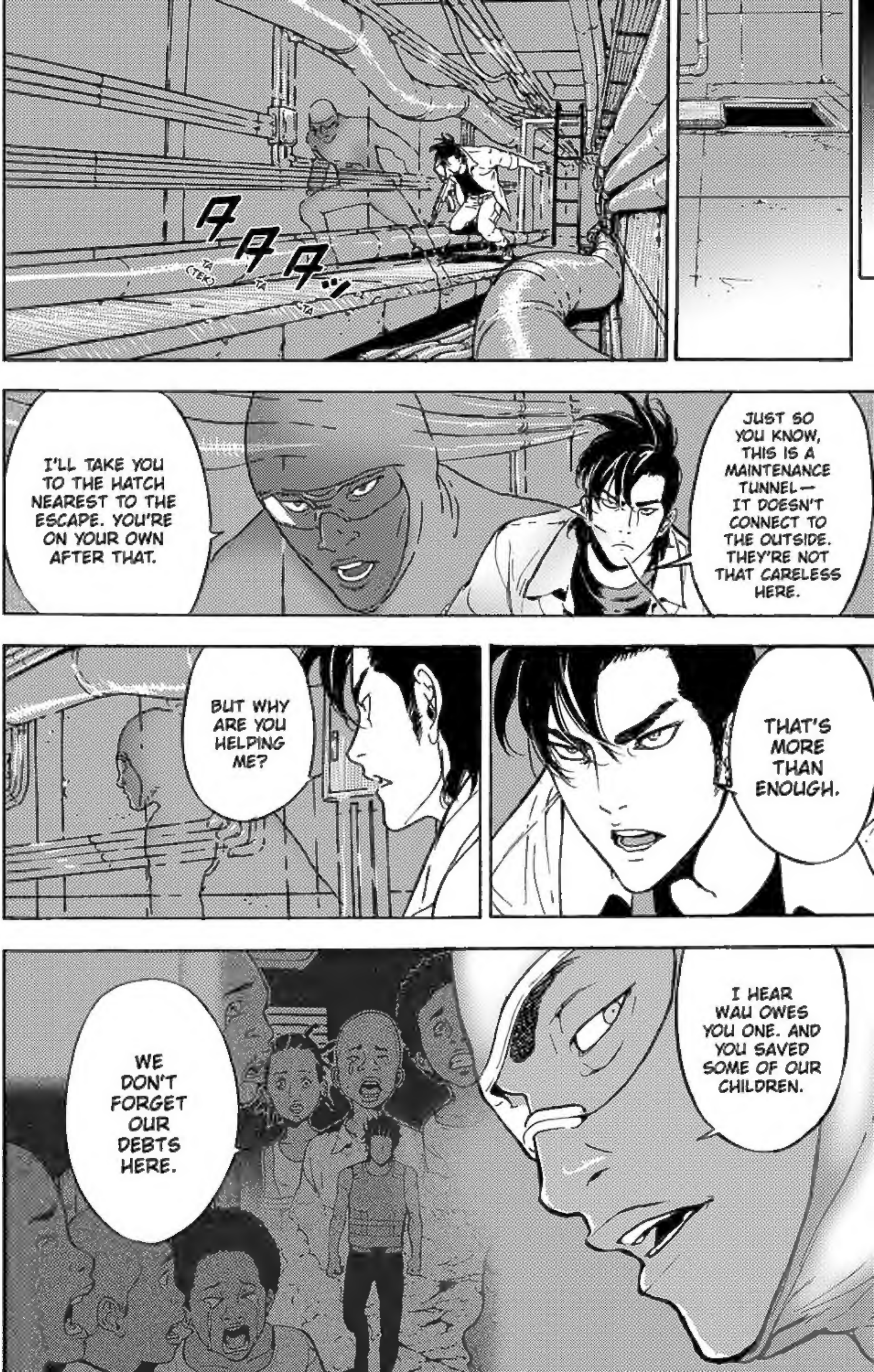
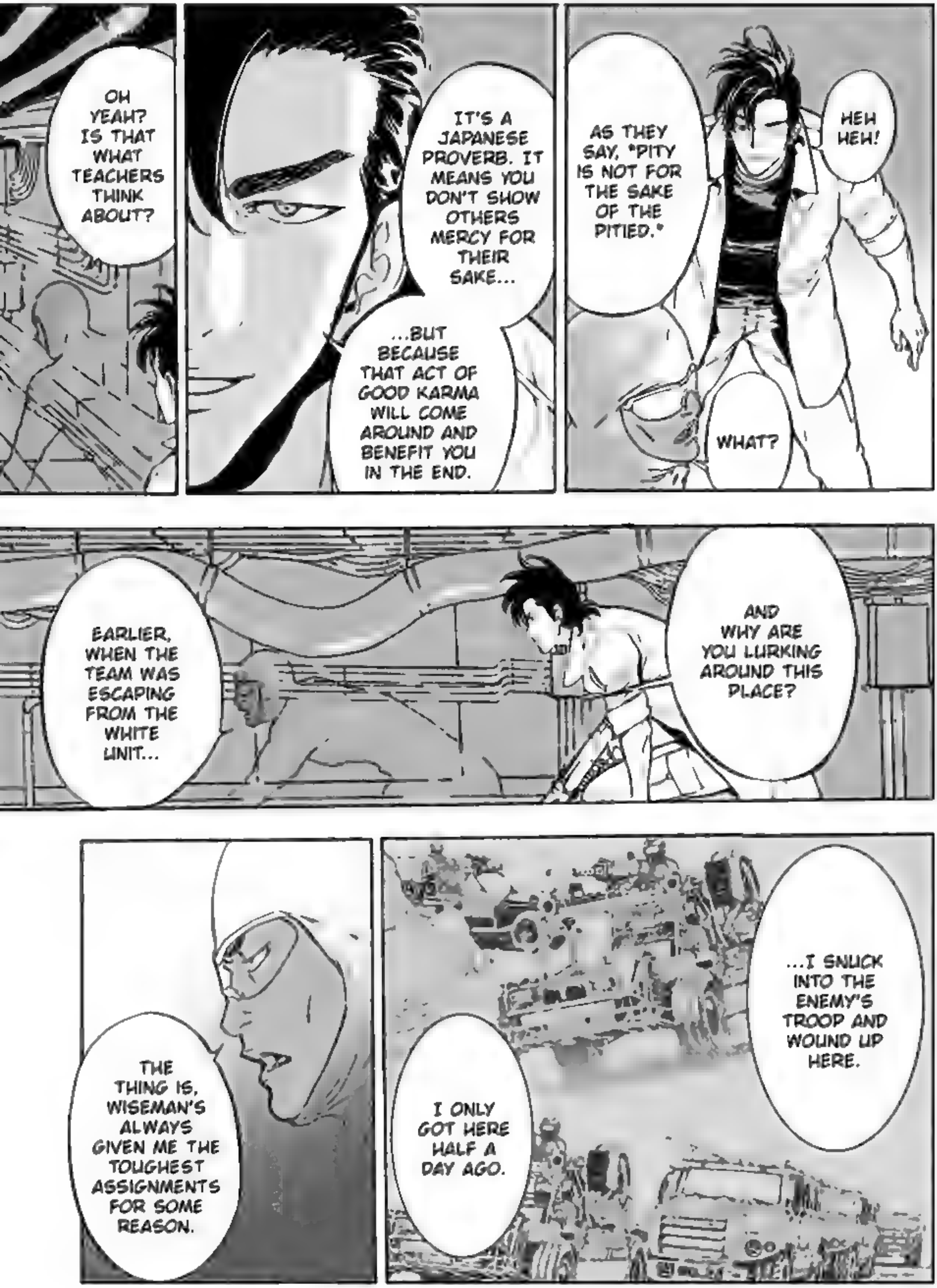
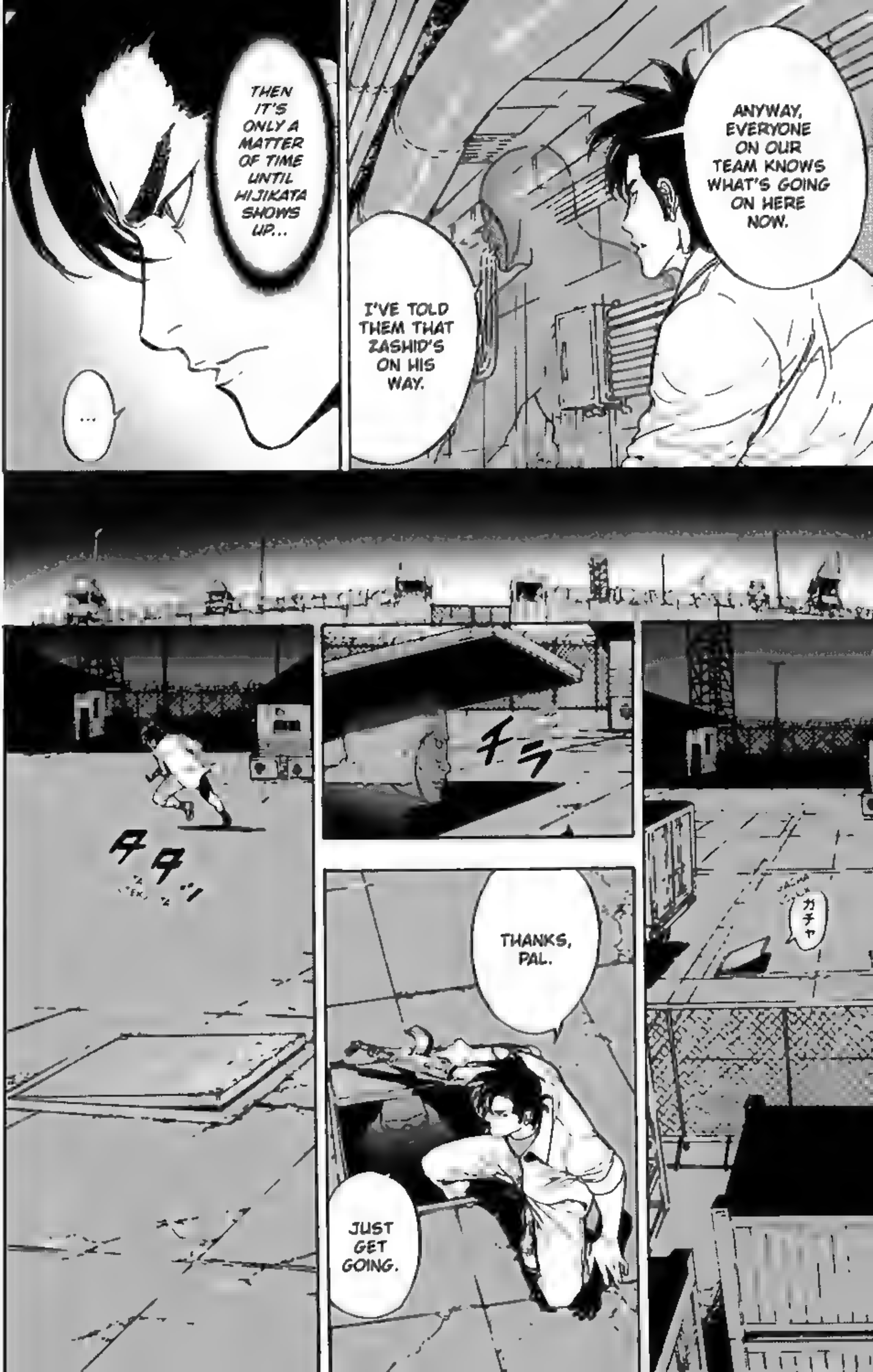
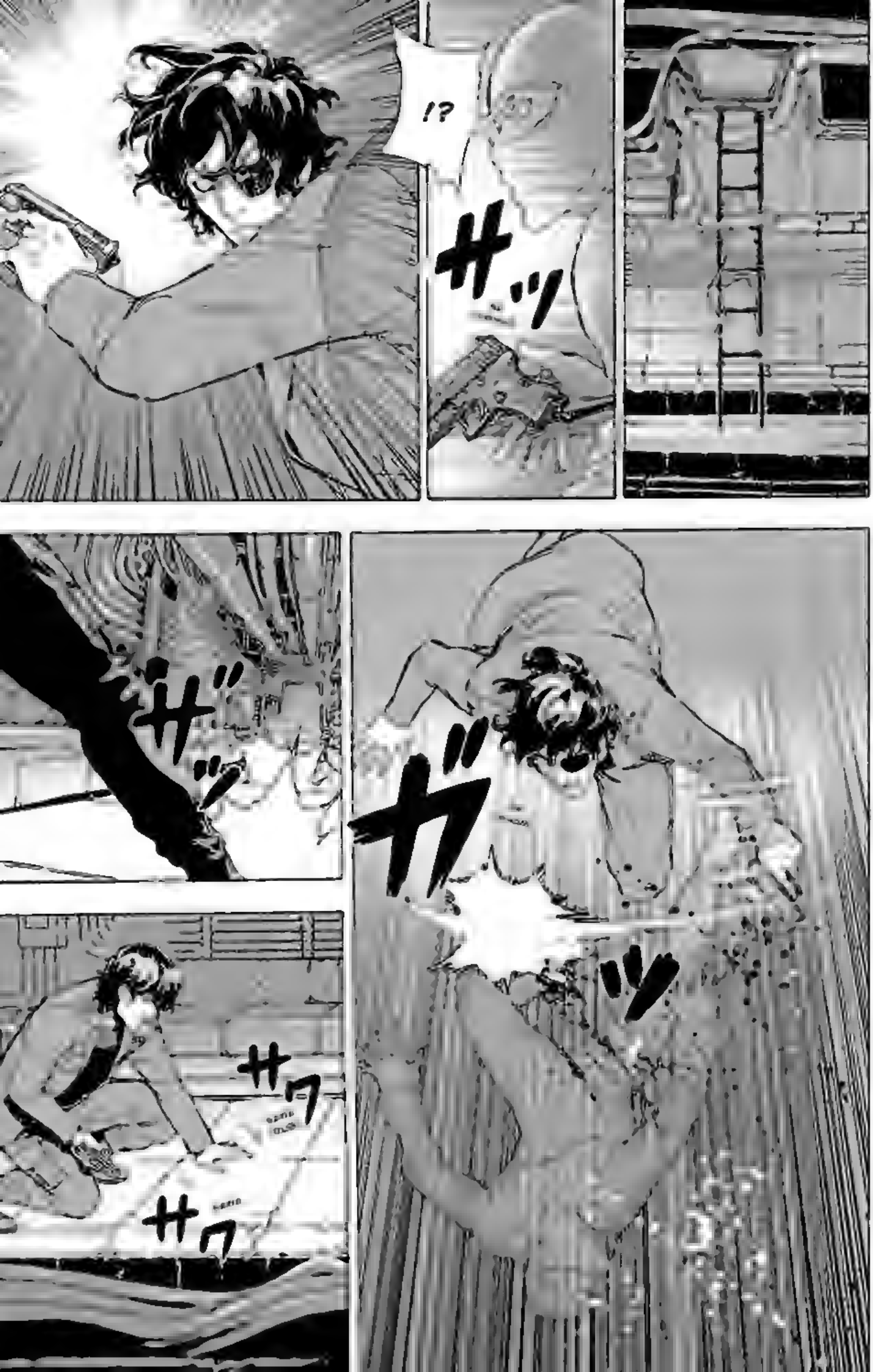

タタタッ
TA (TEK)
TA
TA
JUST SO YOU KNOW, THIS IS A MAINTENANCE TUNNEL— IT DOESN'T CONNECT TO THE OUTSIDE. THEY'RE NOT THAT CARELESS HERE.
I'LL TAKE YOU TO THE HATCH NEAREST TO THE ESCAPE. YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN AFTER THAT.
THAT'S MORE THAN ENOUGH.
BUT WHY ARE YOU HELPING ME?
I HEAR WAU OWES YOU ONE. AND YOU SAVED SOME OF OUR CHILDREN.
WE DON'T FORGET OUR DEBTS HERE.


HEH HEH!
AS THEY SAY, "PITY IS NOT FOR THE SAKE OF THE PITIED."
WHAT?
IT'S A JAPANESE PROVERB. IT MEANS YOU DON'T SHOW OTHERS MERCY FOR THEIR SAKE...
...BUT BECAUSE THAT ACT OF GOOD KARMA WILL COME AROUND AND BENEFIT YOU IN THE END.
OH YEAH? IS THAT WHAT TEACHERS THINK ABOUT?
AND WHY ARE YOU LURKING AROUND THIS PLACE?
EARLIER, WHEN THE TEAM WAS ESCAPING FROM THE WHITE UNIT...
...I SNUCK INTO THE ENEMY'S TROOP AND WOUND UP HERE.
I ONLY GOT HERE HALF A DAY AGO.
THE THING IS, WISEMAN'S ALWAYS GIVEN ME THE TOUGHEST ASSIGNMENTS FOR SOME REASON.


ANYWAY, EVERYONE ON OUR TEAM KNOWS WHAT'S GOING ON HERE NOW.
I'VE TOLD THEM THAT ZASHID'S ON HIS WAY.
THEN IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME UNTIL HIJIKATA SHOWS UP...
...
カチャ
チラ
THANKS, PAL.
JUST GET GOING.
タタッ


!?
ザッ
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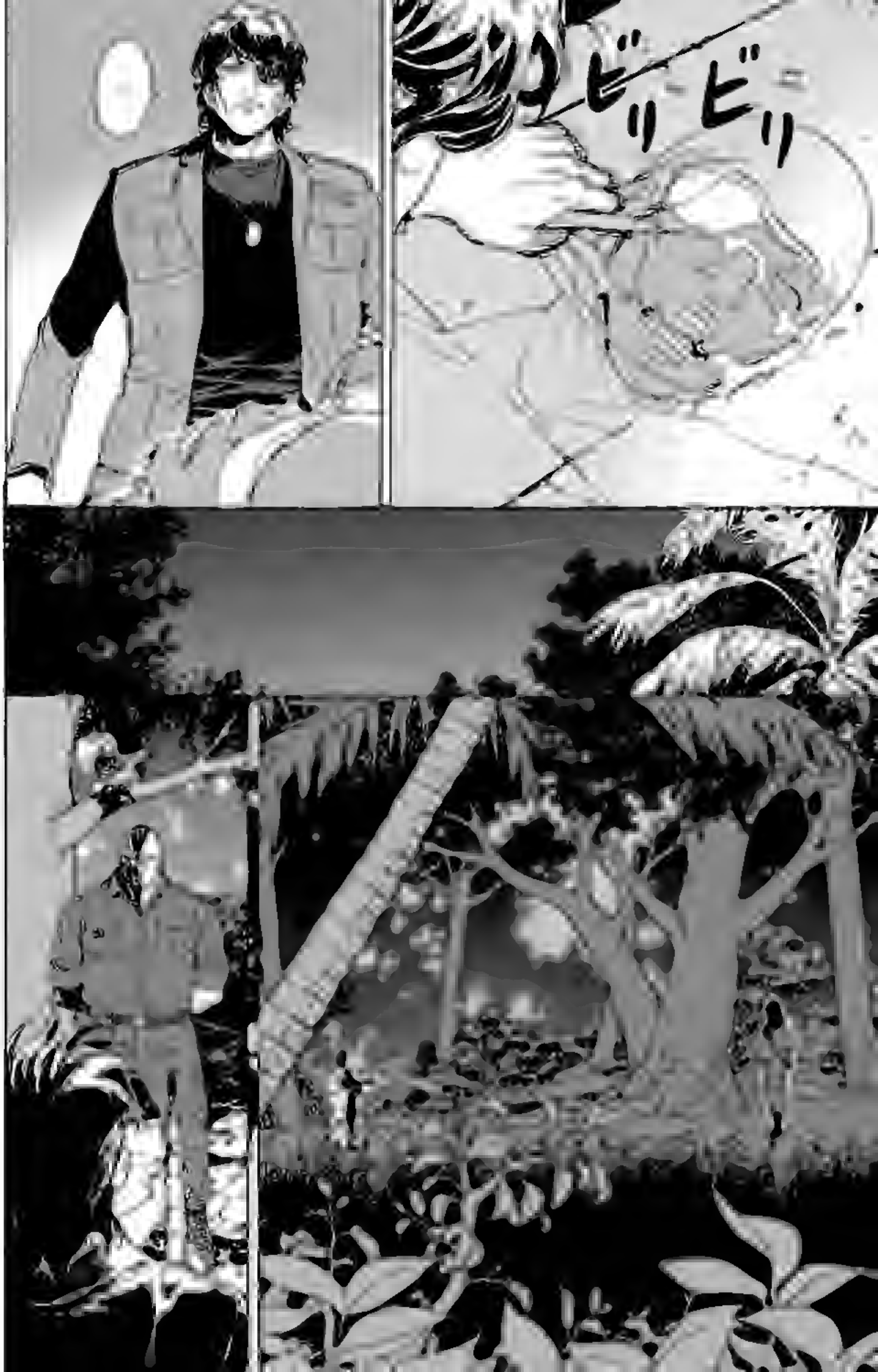
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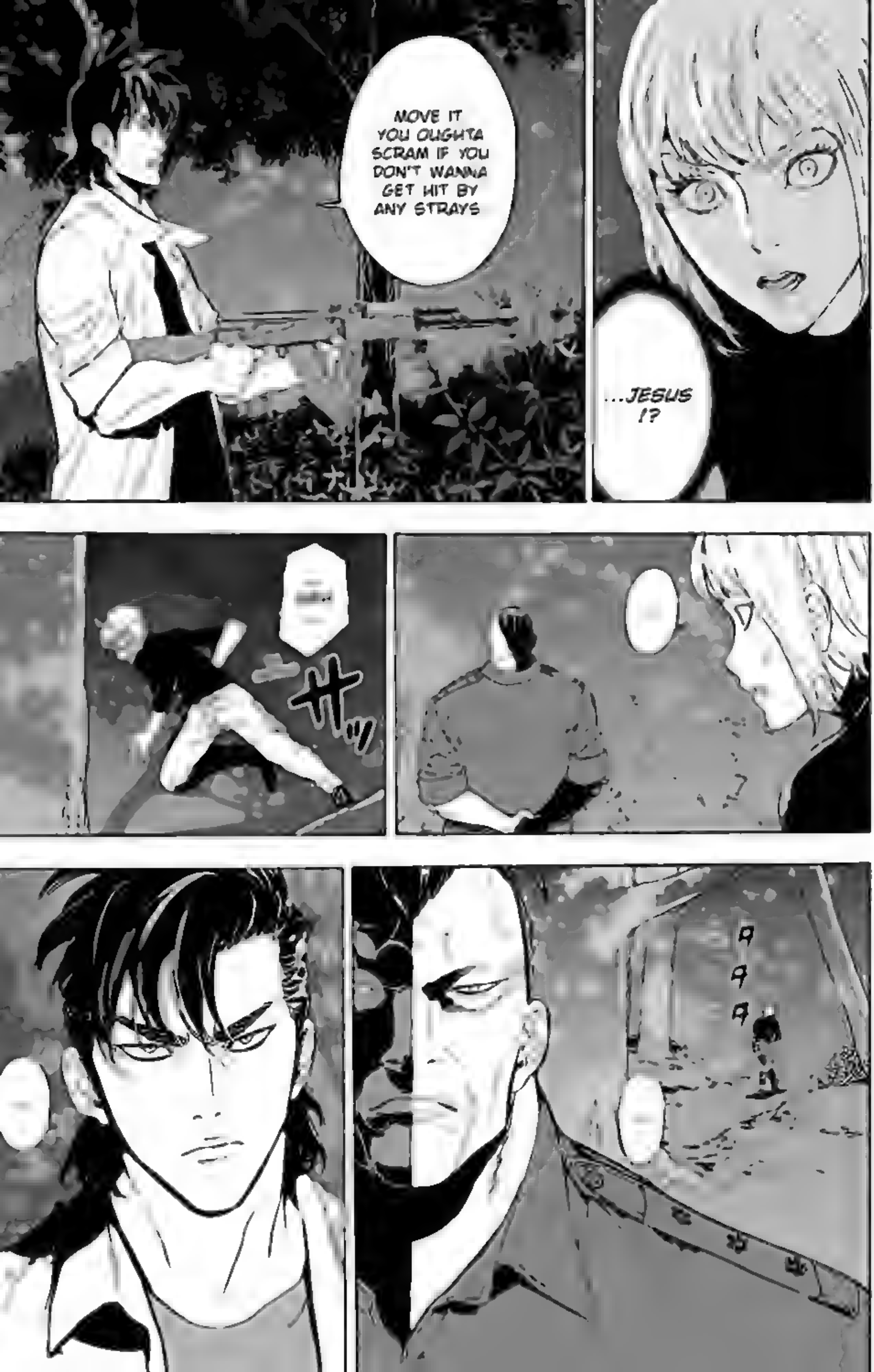
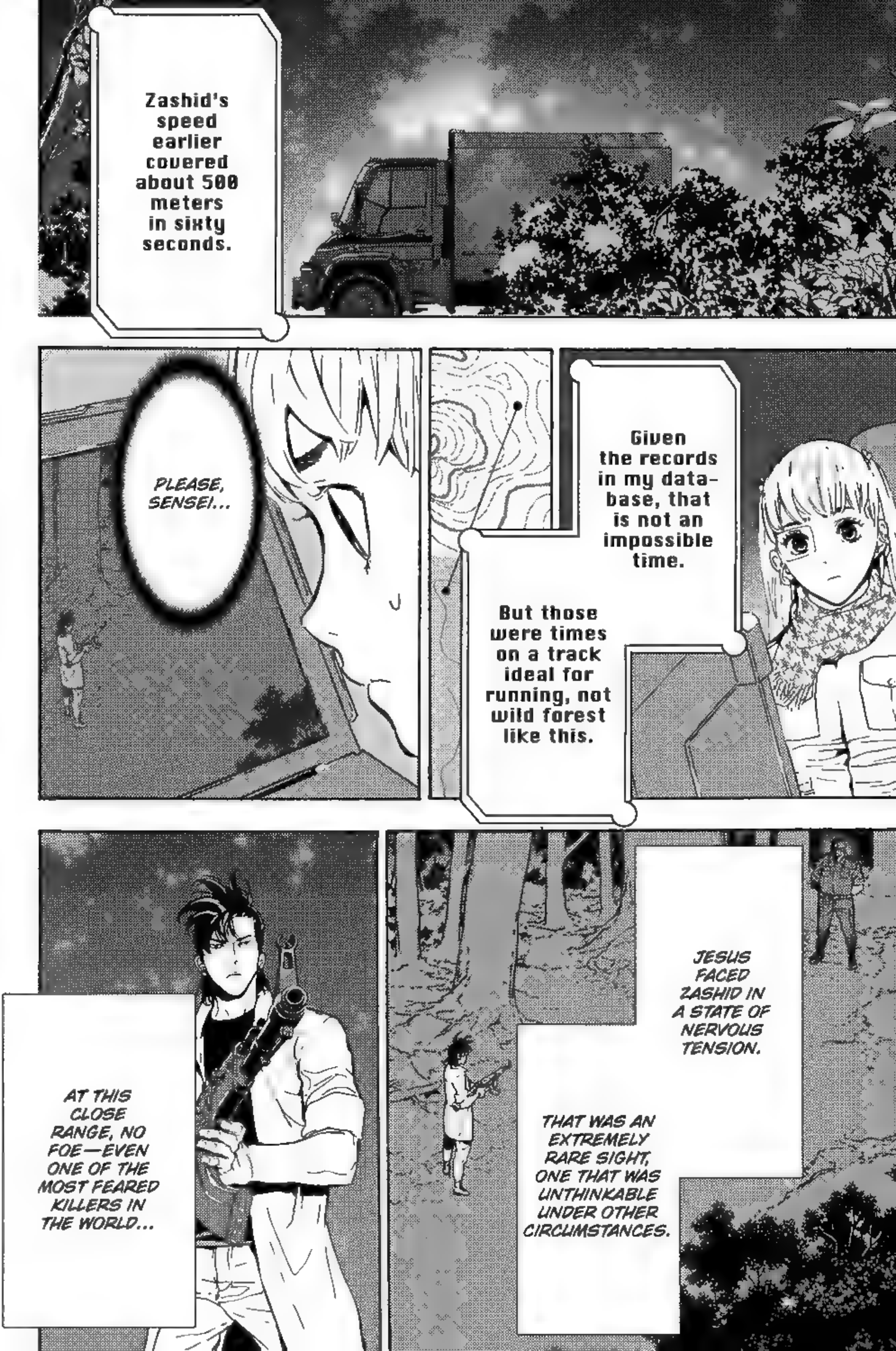
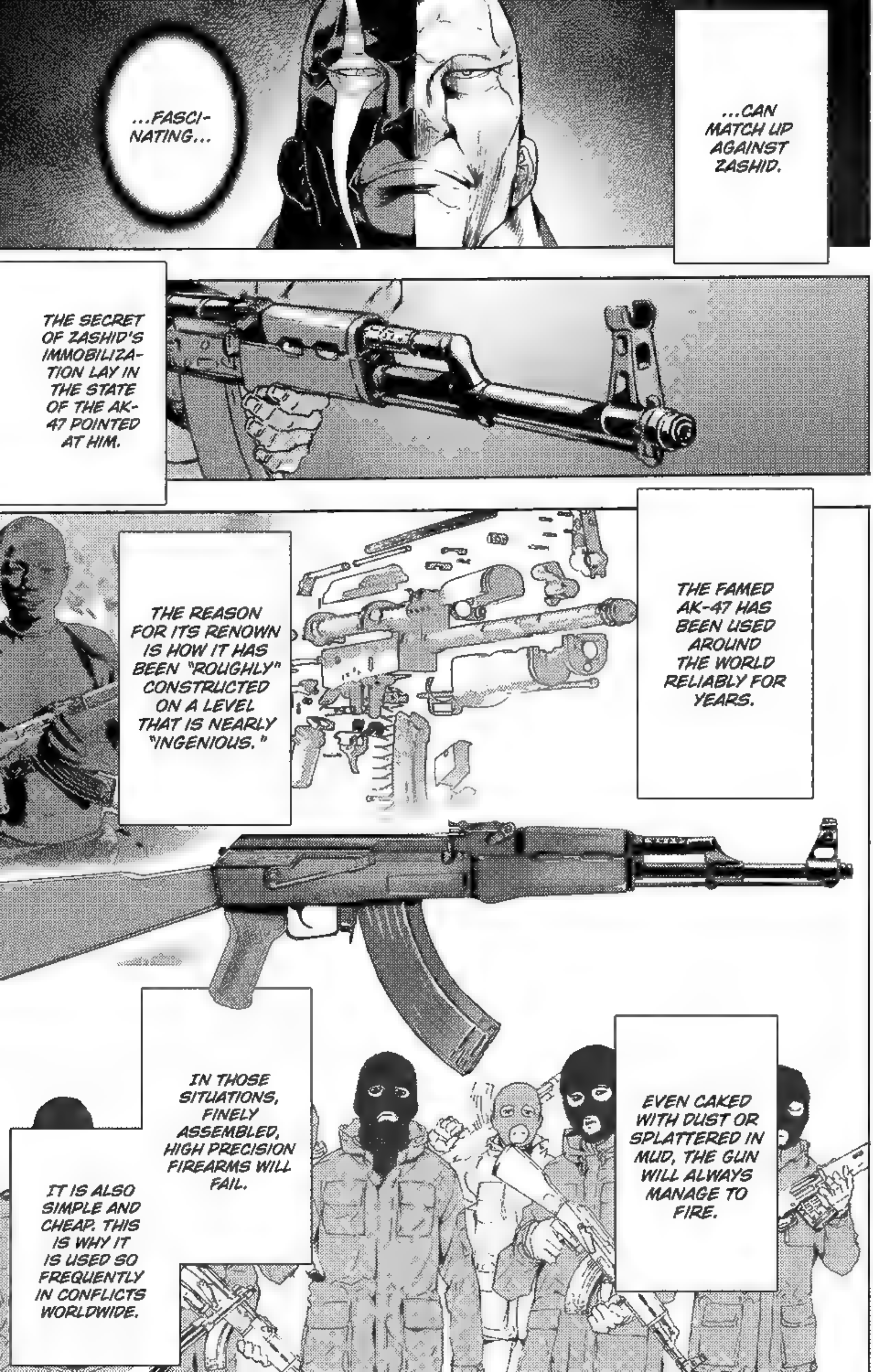
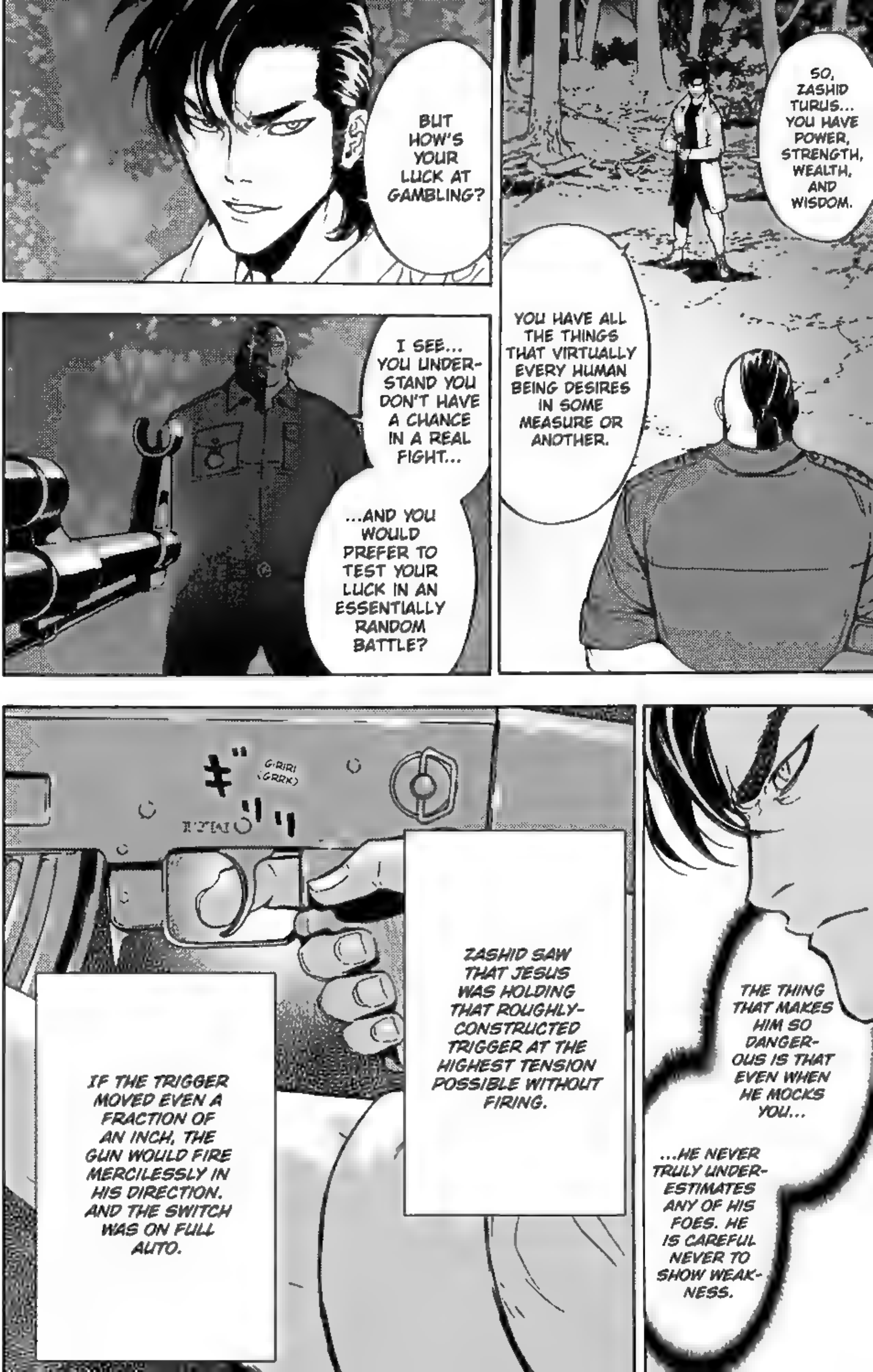
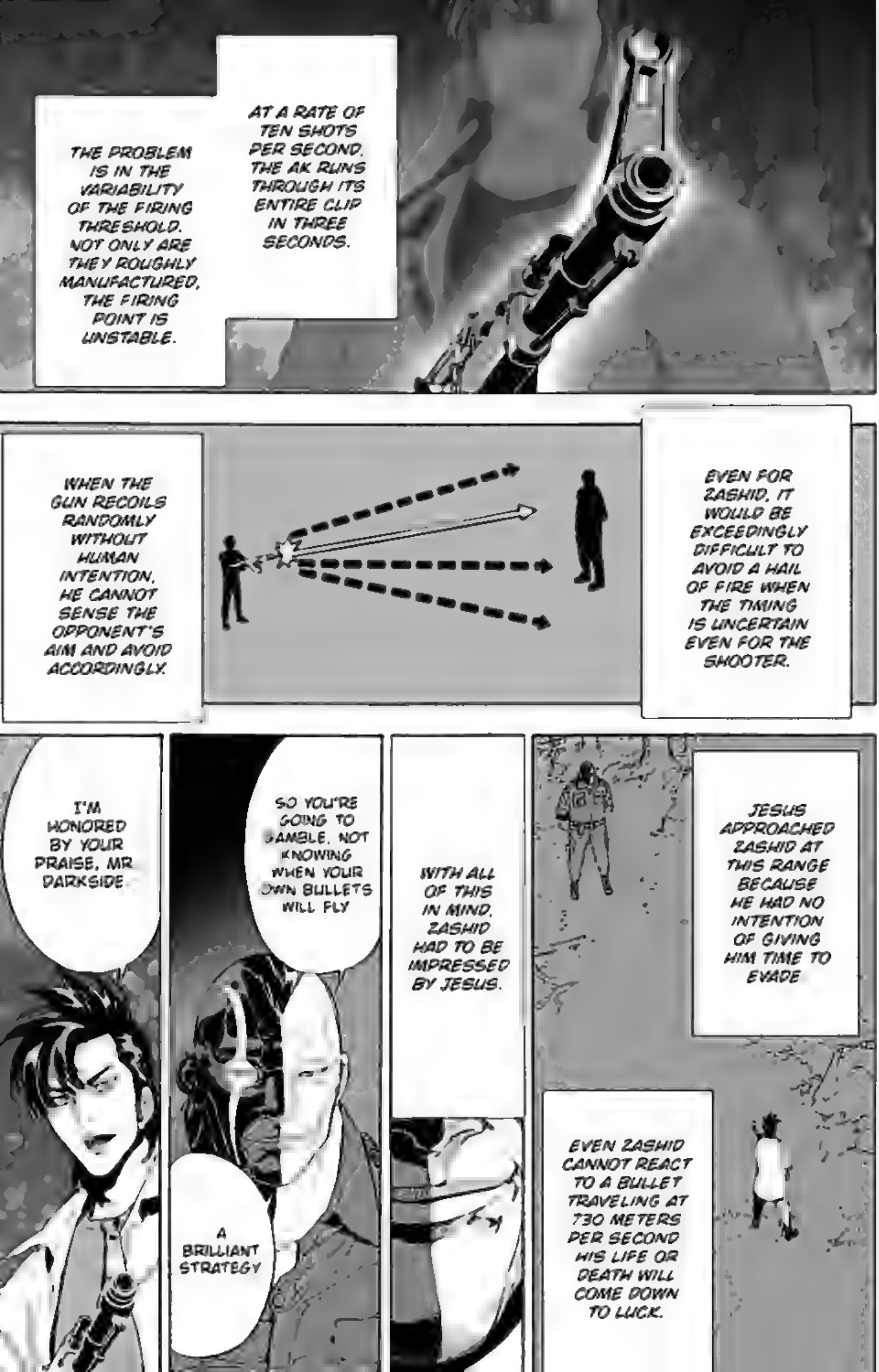
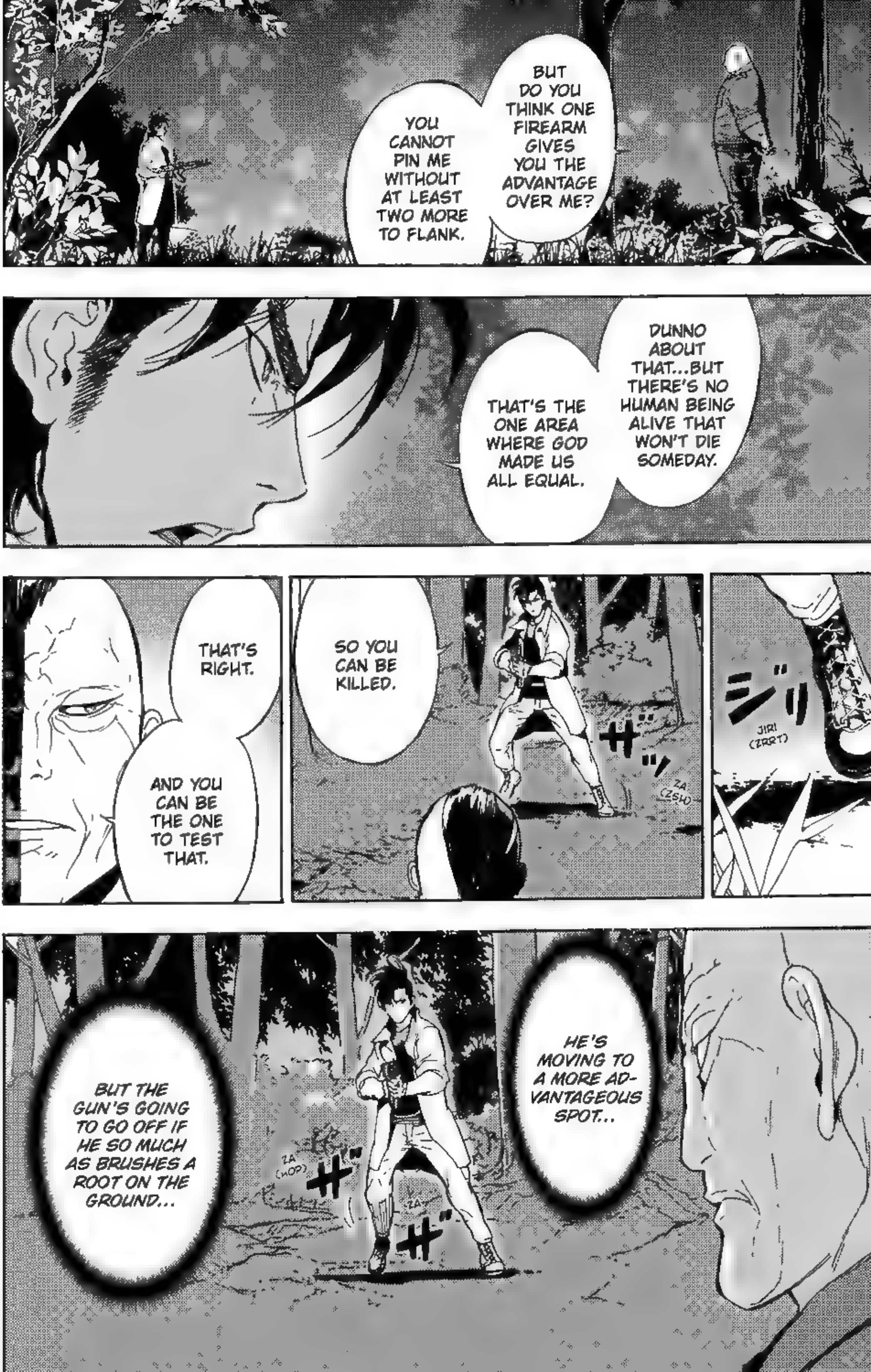

...JESUS !?
MOVE IT YOU OUGHTA SCRAM IF YOU DON'T WANNA GET HIT BY ANY STRAYS
ザッ

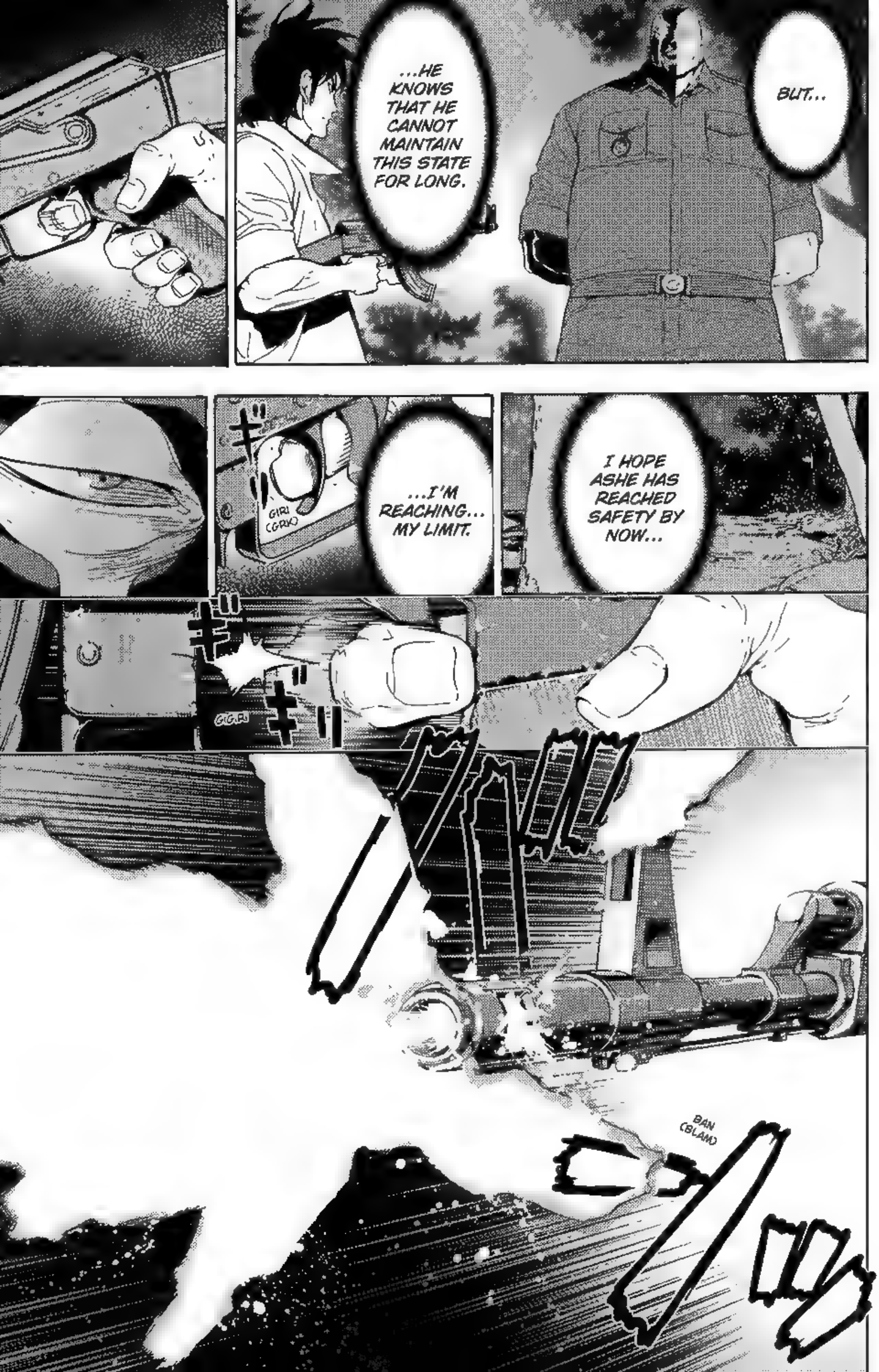

Zashid's speed earlier covered about 500 meters in sixty seconds.
Given the records in my database, that is not an impossible time.
But those were times on a track ideal for running, not wild forest like this.
PLEASE, SENSEI...
JESUS FACED ZASHID IN A STATE OF NERVOUS TENSION.
THAT WAS AN EXTREMELY RARE SIGHT, ONE THAT WAS UNTHINKABLE UNDER OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES.
AT THIS CLOSE RANGE, NO FOE—EVEN ONE OF THE MOST FEARED KILLERS IN THE WORLD...

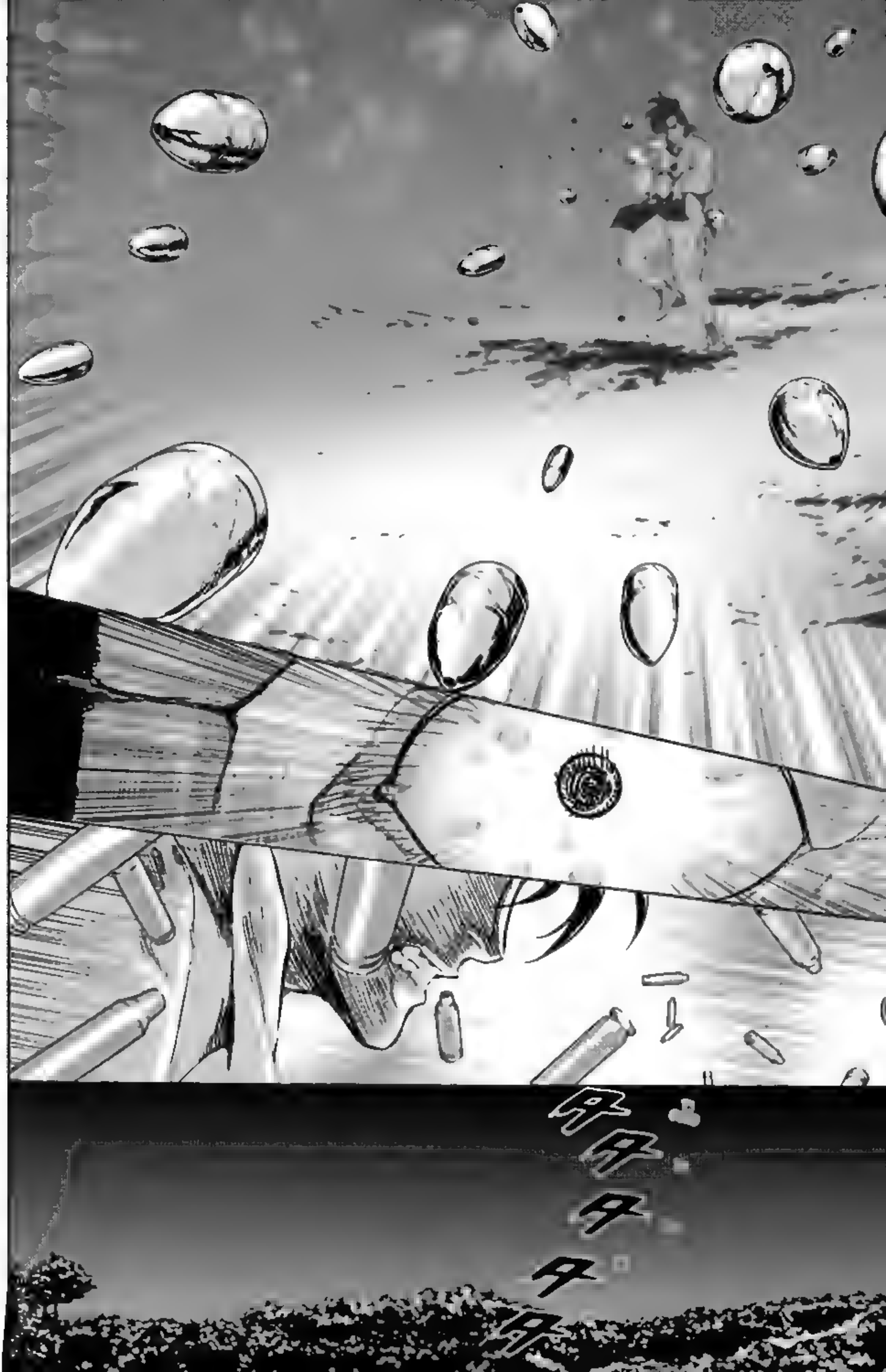

...CAN MATCH UP AGAINST ZASHID.
...FASCINATING...
THE SECRET OF ZASHID'S IMMOBILIZATION LAY IN THE STATE OF THE AK-47 POINTED AT HIM.
THE FAMED AK-47 HAS BEEN USED AROUND THE WORLD RELIABLY FOR YEARS.
THE REASON FOR ITS RENOWN IS HOW IT HAS BEEN "ROUGHLY" CONSTRUCTED ON A LEVEL THAT IS NEARLY "INGENIOUS."
EVEN CAKED WITH DUST OR SPLATTERED IN MUD, THE GUN WILL ALWAYS MANAGE TO FIRE.
IN THOSE SITUATIONS, FINELY ASSEMBLED, HIGH PRECISION FIREARMS WILL FAIL.
IT IS ALSO SIMPLE AND CHEAP. THIS IS WHY IT IS USED SO FREQUENTLY IN CONFLICTS WORLDWIDE.


SO, ZASHID TURUS... YOU HAVE POWER, STRENGTH, WEALTH, AND WISDOM.
YOU HAVE ALL THE THINGS THAT VIRTUALLY EVERY HUMAN BEING DESIRES IN SOME MEASURE OR ANOTHER.
BUT HOW'S YOUR LUCK AT GAMBLING?
I SEE... YOU UNDERSTAND YOU DON'T HAVE A CHANCE IN A REAL FIGHT...
...AND YOU WOULD PREFER TO TEST YOUR LUCK IN AN ESSENTIALLY RANDOM BATTLE?
THE THING THAT MAKES HIM SO DANGEROUS IS THAT EVEN WHEN HE MOCKS YOU...
...HE NEVER TRULY UNDERESTIMATES ANY OF HIS FOES. HE IS CAREFUL NEVER TO SHOW WEAKNESS.
ギリ
G-RIRI (GRRK)
ZASHID SAW THAT JESUS WAS HOLDING THAT ROUGHLY-CONSTRUCTED TRIGGER AT THE HIGHEST TENSION POSSIBLE WITHOUT FIRING.
IF THE TRIGGER MOVED EVEN A FRACTION OF AN INCH, THE GUN WOULD FIRE MERCILESSLY IN HIS DIRECTION. AND THE SWITCH WAS ON FULL AUTO.


AT A RATE OF TEN SHOTS PER SECOND, THE AK RUNS THROUGH ITS ENTIRE CLIP IN THREE SECONDS.
THE PROBLEM IS IN THE VARIABILITY OF THE FIRING THRESHOLD. NOT ONLY ARE THEY ROUGHLY MANUFACTURED, THE FIRING POINT IS UNSTABLE.
EVEN FOR ZASHID, IT WOULD BE EXCEEDINGLY DIFFICULT TO AVOID A HAIL OF FIRE WHEN THE TIMING IS UNCERTAIN EVEN FOR THE SHOOTER.
WHEN THE GUN RECOILS RANDOMLY WITHOUT HUMAN INTENTION, HE CANNOT SENSE THE OPPONENT'S AIM AND AVOID ACCORDINGLY.
JESUS APPROACHED ZASHID AT THIS RANGE BECAUSE HE HAD NO INTENTION OF GIVING HIM TIME TO EVADE
EVEN ZASHID CANNOT REACT TO A BULLET TRAVELING AT 730 METERS PER SECOND HIS LIFE OR DEATH WILL COME DOWN TO LUCK.
WITH ALL OF THIS IN MIND, ZASHID HAD TO BE IMPRESSED BY JESUS.
SO YOU'RE GOING TO GAMBLE, NOT KNOWING WHEN YOUR OWN BULLETS WILL FLY
A BRILLIANT STRATEGY
I'M HONORED BY YOUR PRAISE, MR DARKSIDE.


BUT DO YOU THINK ONE FIREARM GIVES YOU THE ADVANTAGE OVER ME?
YOU CANNOT PIN ME WITHOUT AT LEAST TWO MORE TO FLANK.
DUNNO ABOUT THAT...BUT THERE'S NO HUMAN BEING ALIVE THAT WON'T DIE SOMEDAY.
THAT'S THE ONE AREA WHERE GOD MADE US ALL EQUAL.
ジリ JIRI (ZRRT)
SO YOU CAN BE KILLED.
ザッ ZA (ZSH)
THAT'S RIGHT.
AND YOU CAN BE THE ONE TO TEST THAT.
HE'S MOVING TO A MORE ADVANTAGEOUS SPOT...
BUT THE GUN'S GOING TO GO OFF IF HE SO MUCH AS BRUSHES A ROOT ON THE GROUND...
ザッ ZA (HOP)
ザッ ZA


BUT...
...HE KNOWS THAT HE CANNOT MAINTAIN THIS STATE FOR LONG.
I HOPE ASHE HAS REACHED SAFETY BY NOW...
...I'M REACHING... MY LIMIT.
ギ
GIRI (GRK)
ギ
ギギリ
GIGIRI
BAN (BLAM)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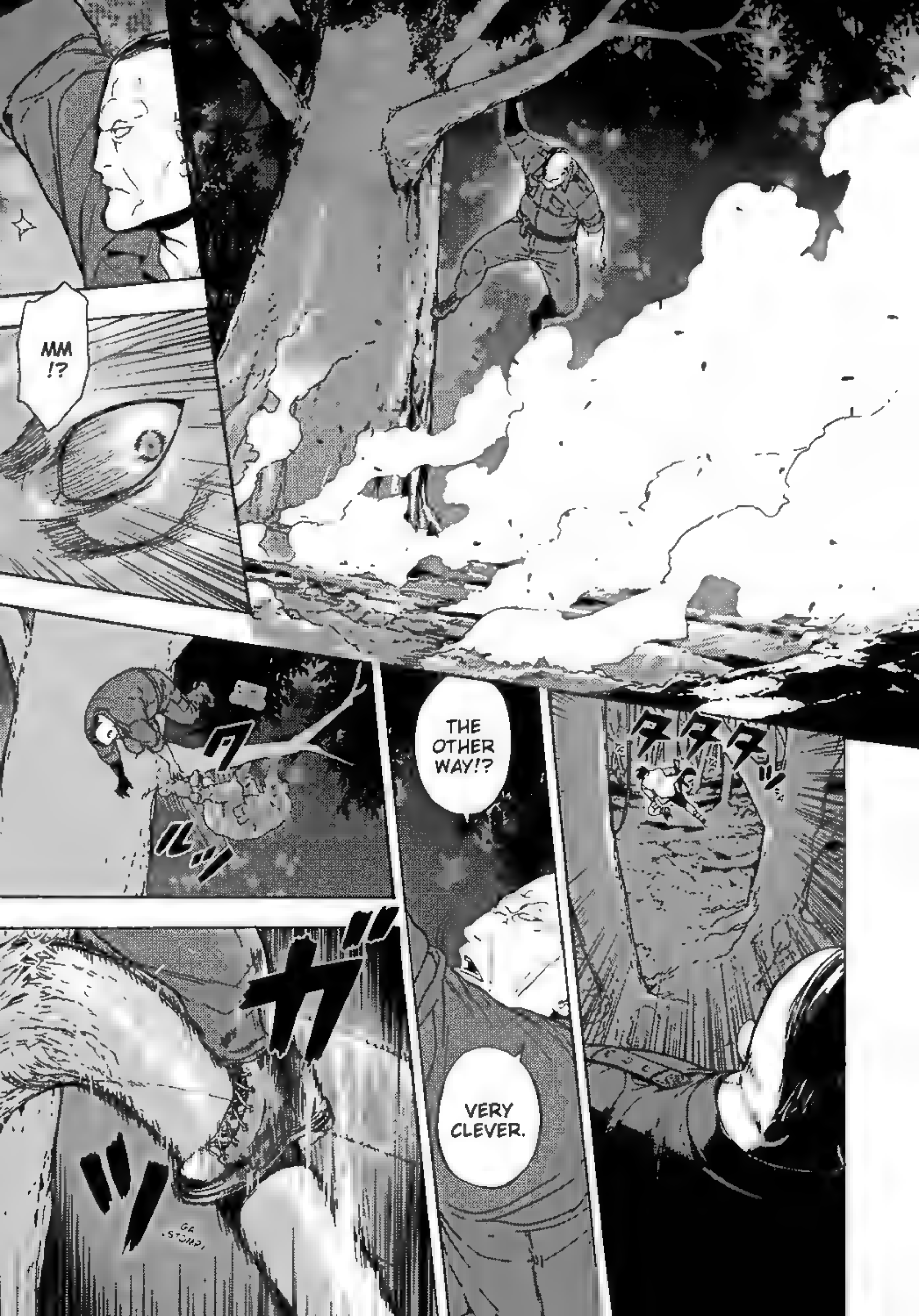
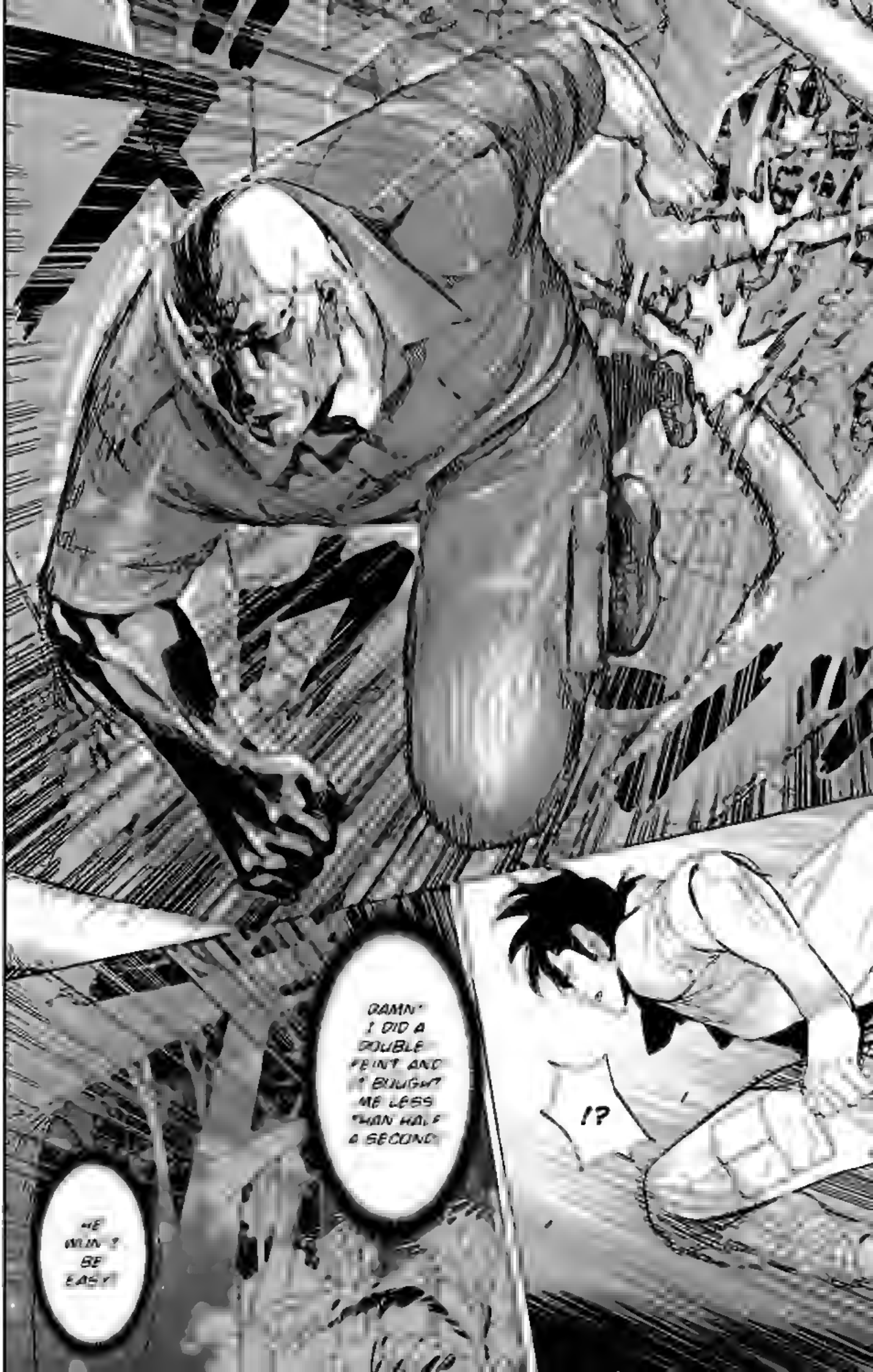
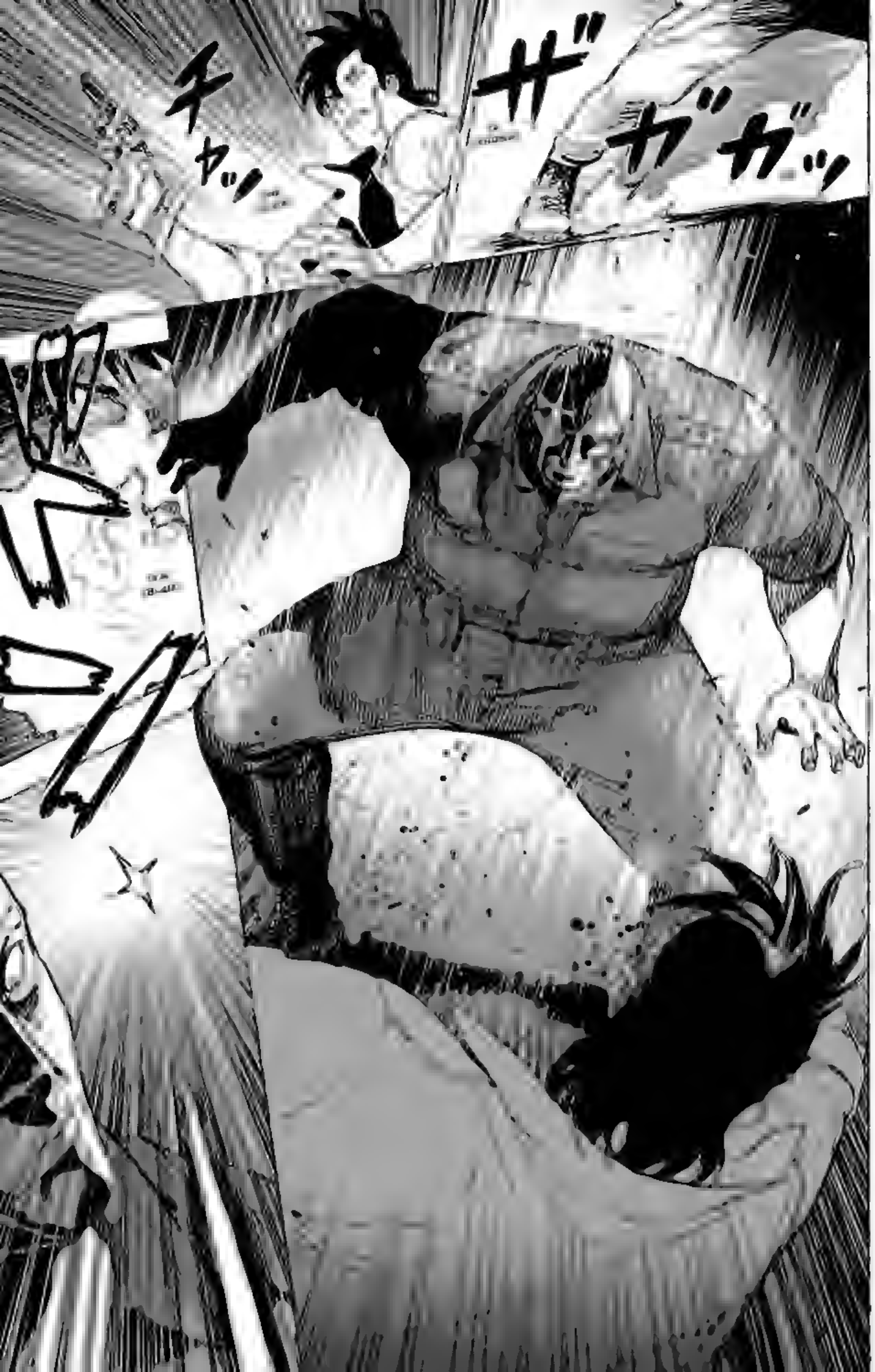
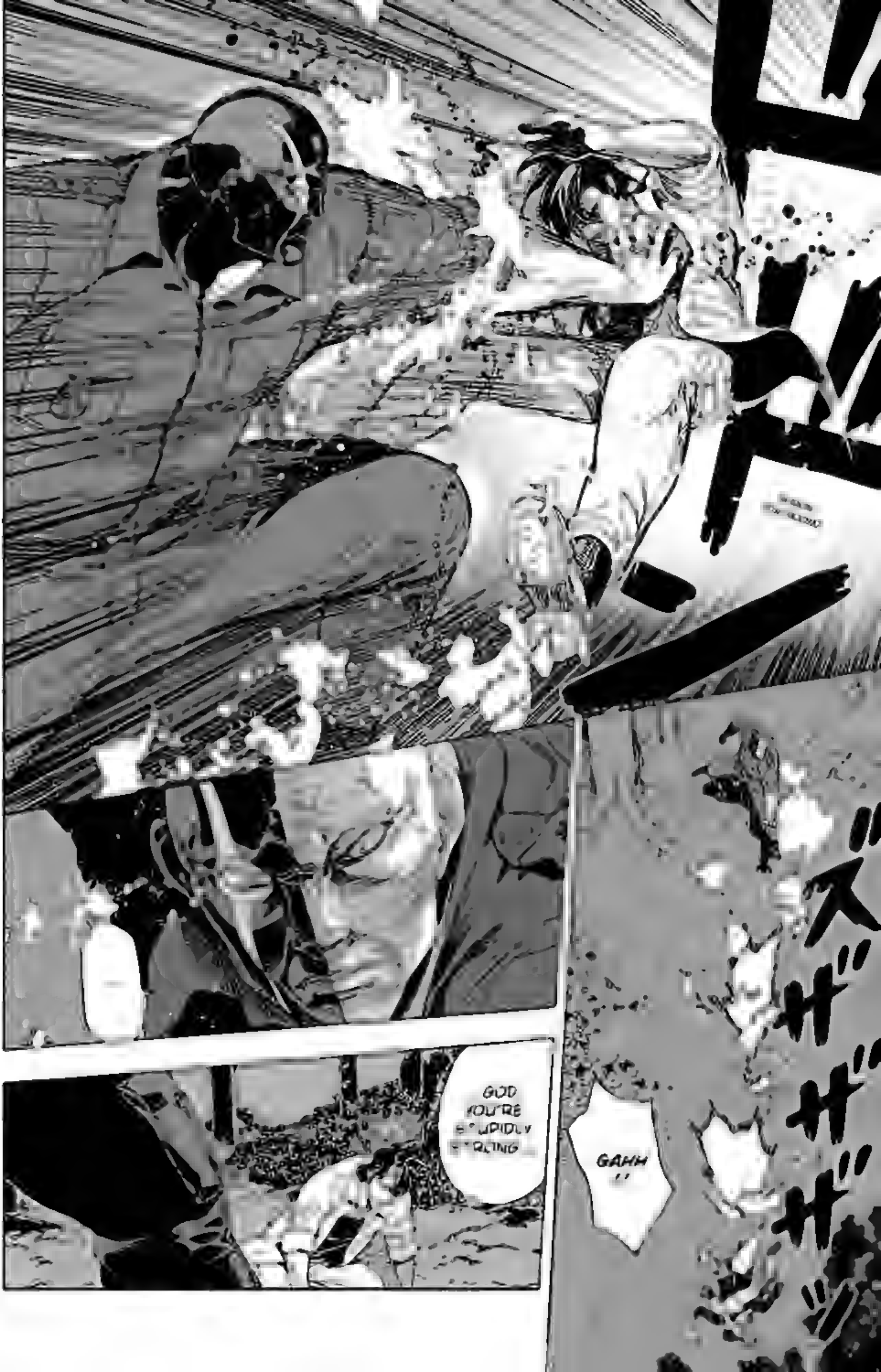
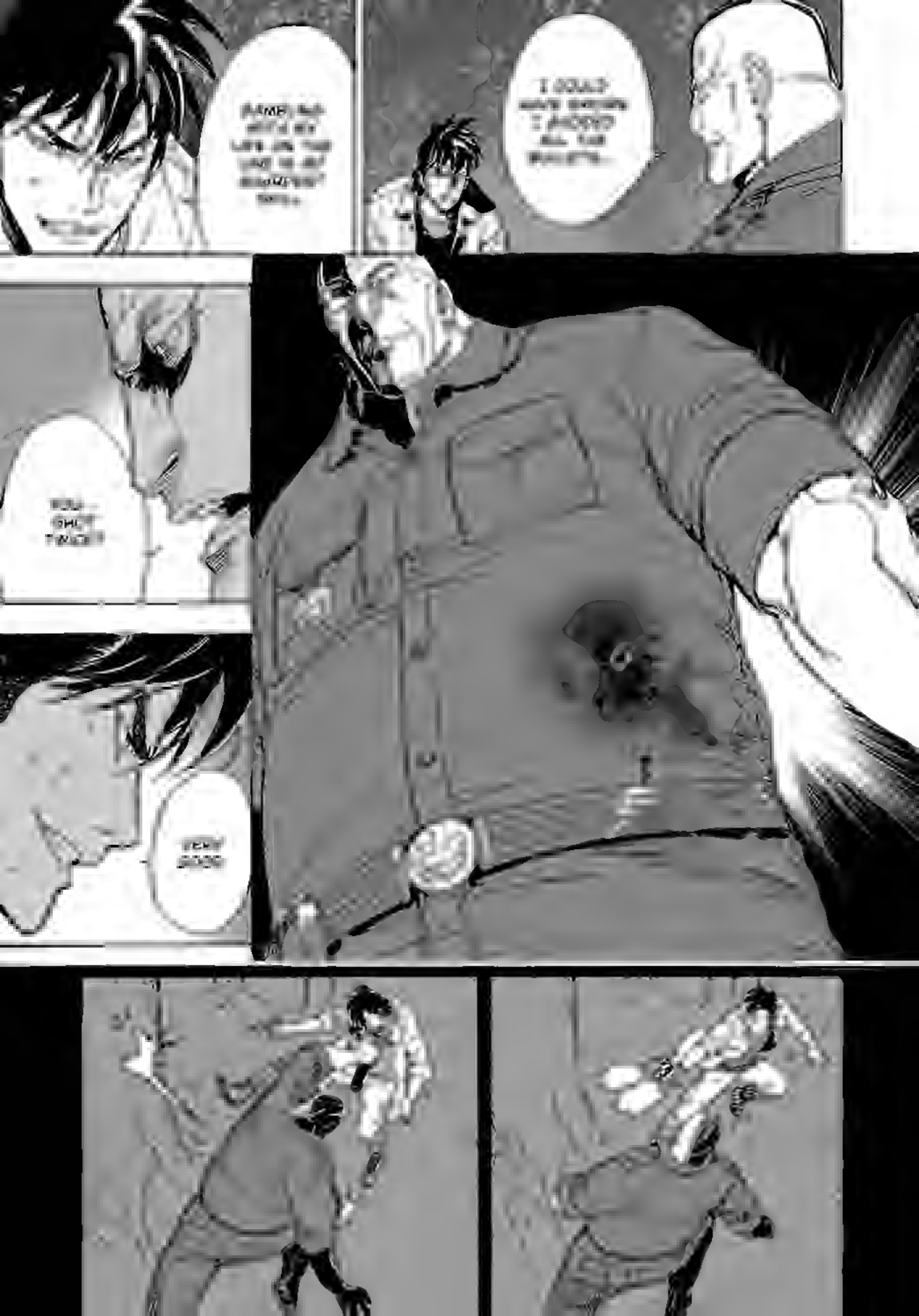
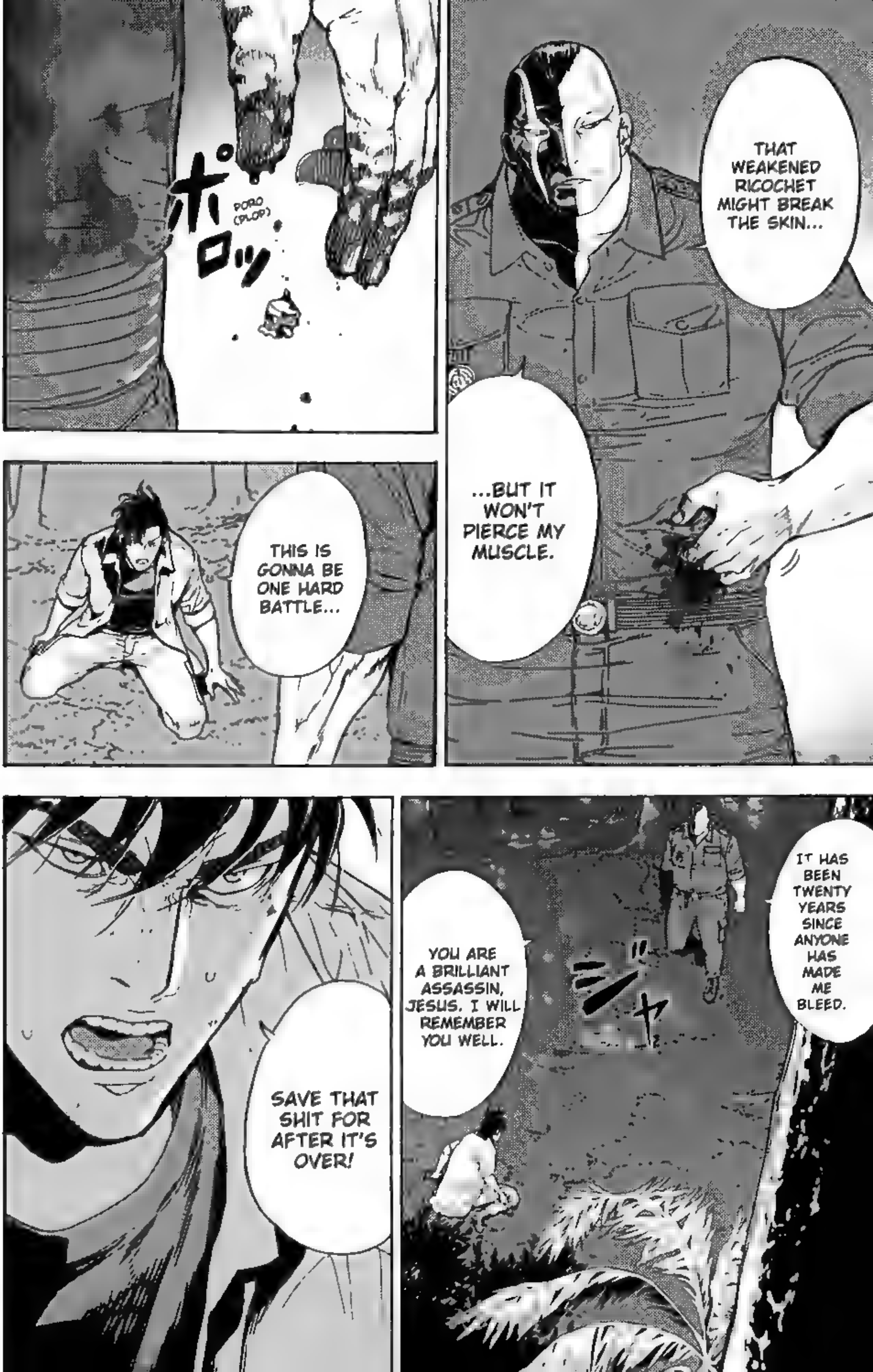

MM !?
タタタッ
THE OTHER WAY!?
クルッ
VERY CLEVER.
ガッ
GA STOMP!

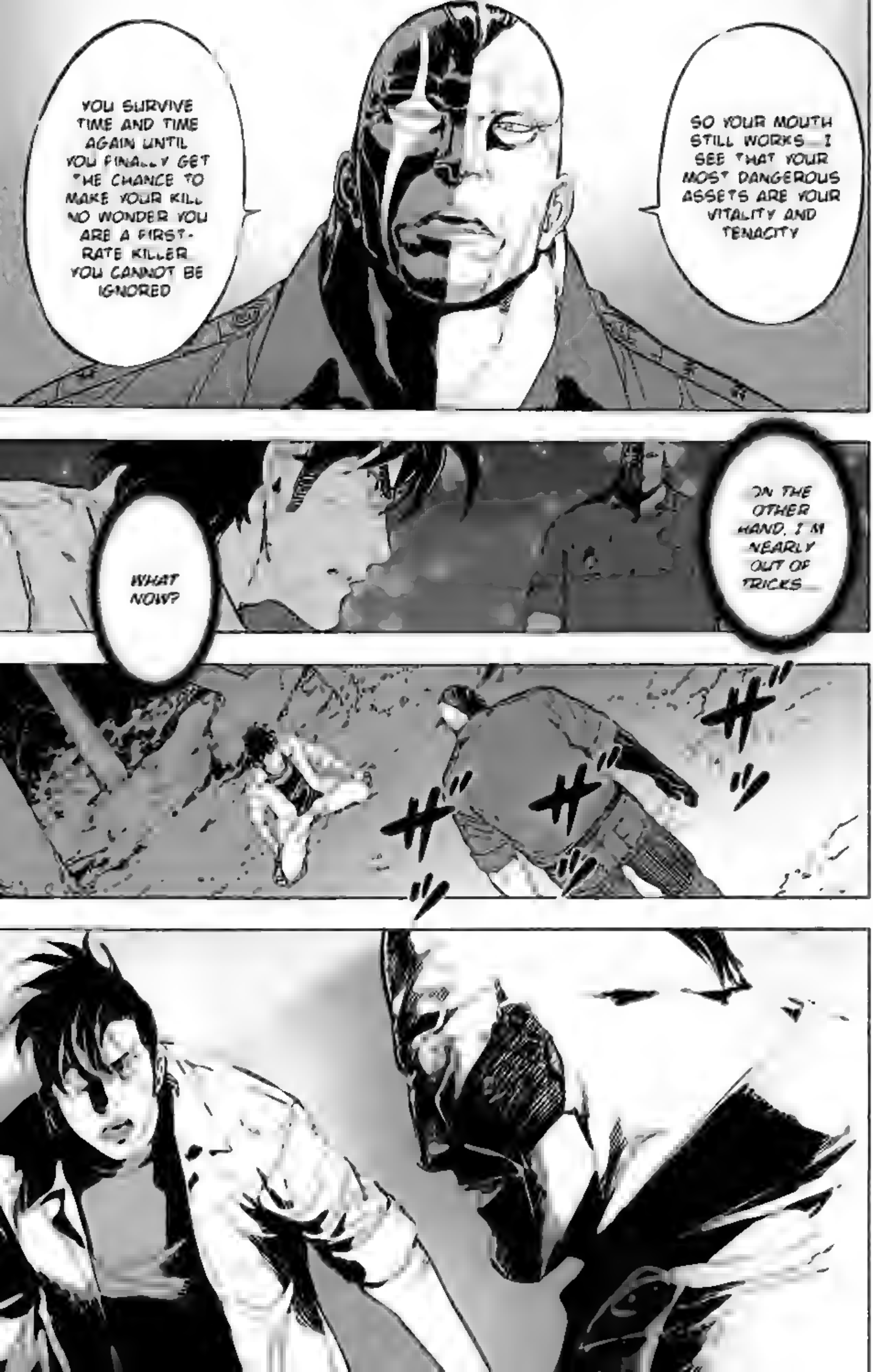

!?
DAMN! I DID A DOUBLE FEINT AND IT BOUGHT ME LESS THAN HALF A SECOND.
HE WON'T BE EASY!

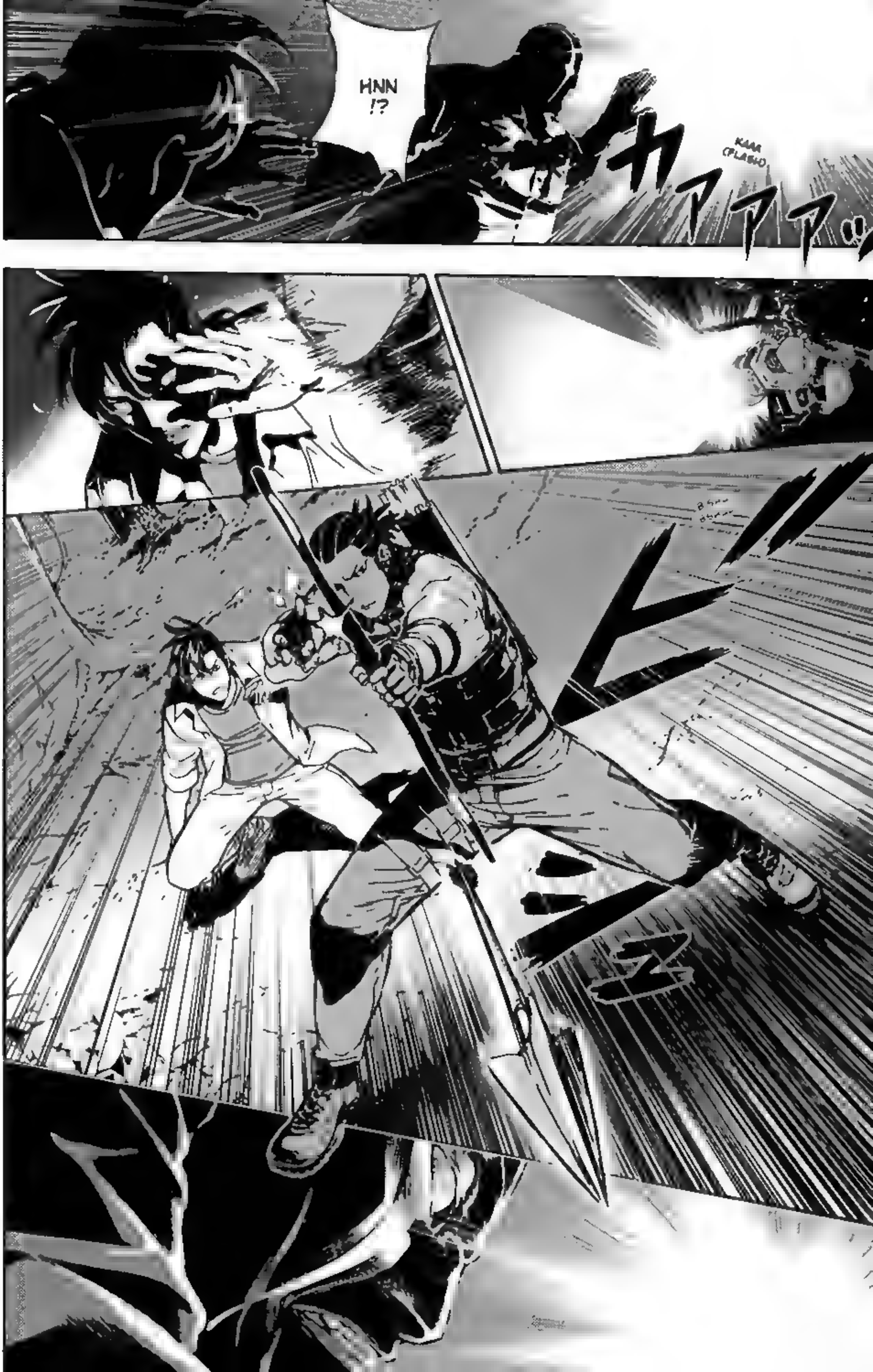

ザガガッ
チャッ


ズザザザッ
GAHH !!
GOD YOU'RE STUPIDLY STRONG...


I COULD HAVE SWORN I DODGED ALL THE BULLETS.
GAMBLING WITH MY LIFE ON THE LINE IS MY SPECIALTY, TOO...
YOU... SHOT TWICE?
VERY GOOD.

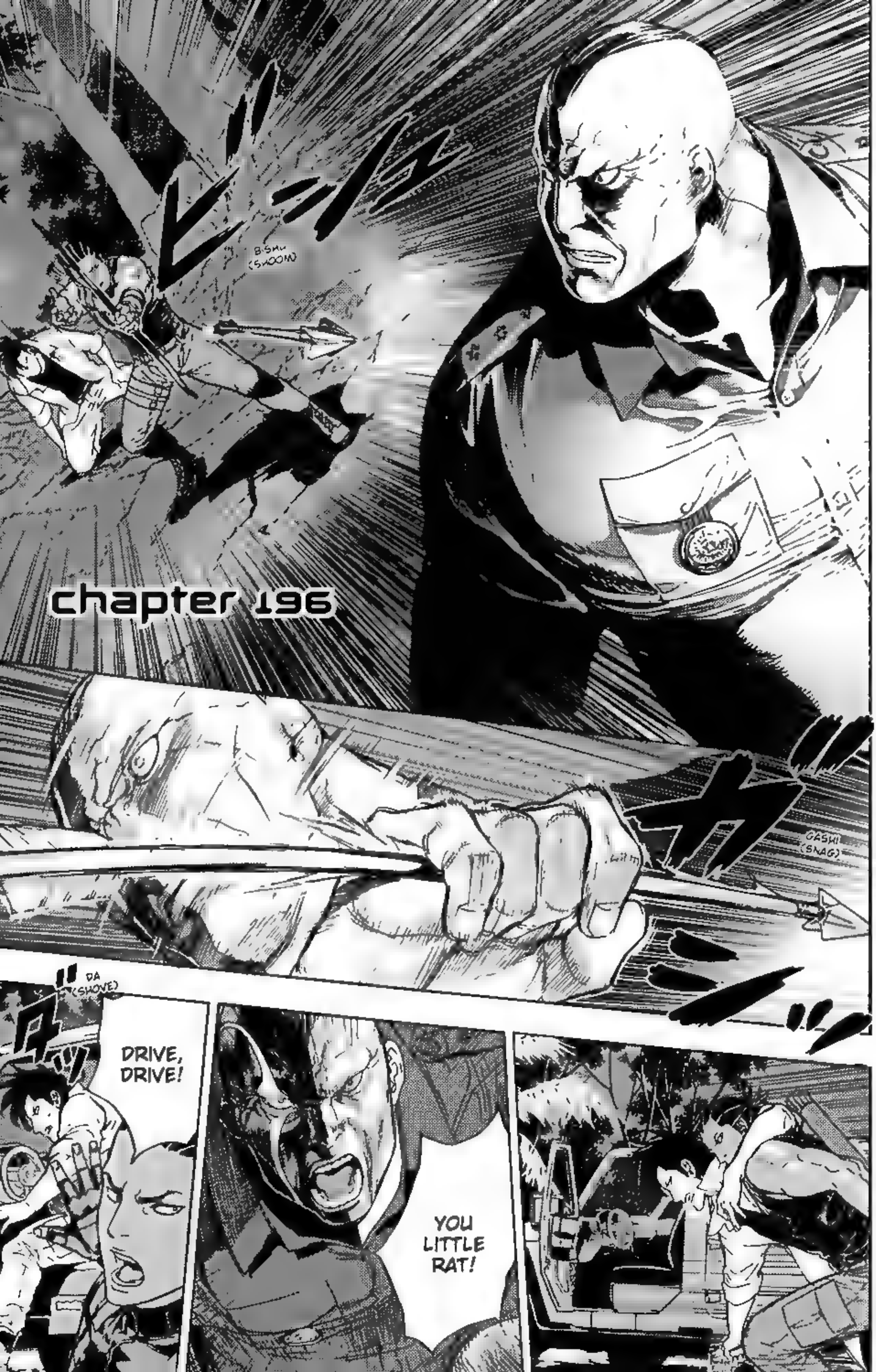

THAT WEAKENED RICOCHET MIGHT BREAK THE SKIN...
...BUT IT WON'T PIERCE MY MUSCLE.
ポロッ
PORO (PLOP)
THIS IS GONNA BE ONE HARD BATTLE...
IT HAS BEEN TWENTY YEARS SINCE ANYONE HAS MADE ME BLEED.
YOU ARE A BRILLIANT ASSASSIN, JESUS. I WILL REMEMBER YOU WELL.
ジャ
SAVE THAT SHIT FOR AFTER IT'S OVER!

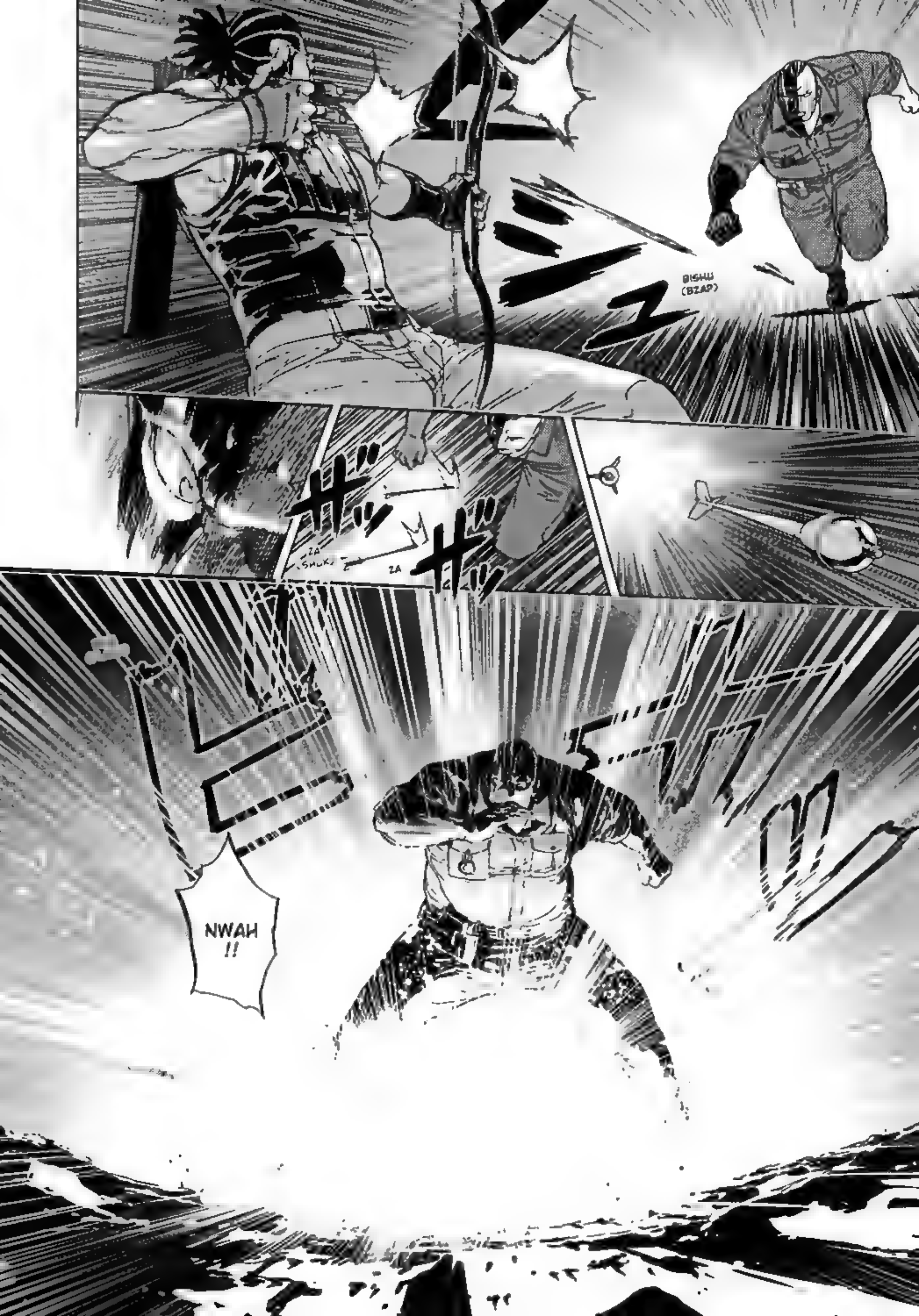

SO YOUR MOUTH STILL WORKS... I SEE THAT YOUR MOST DANGEROUS ASSETS ARE YOUR VITALITY AND TENACITY
YOU SURVIVE TIME AND TIME AGAIN UNTIL YOU FINALLY GET THE CHANCE TO MAKE YOUR KILL NO WONDER YOU ARE A FIRST-RATE KILLER YOU CANNOT BE IGNORED
ON THE OTHER HAND, I'M NEARLY OUT OF TRICKS...
WHAT NOW?

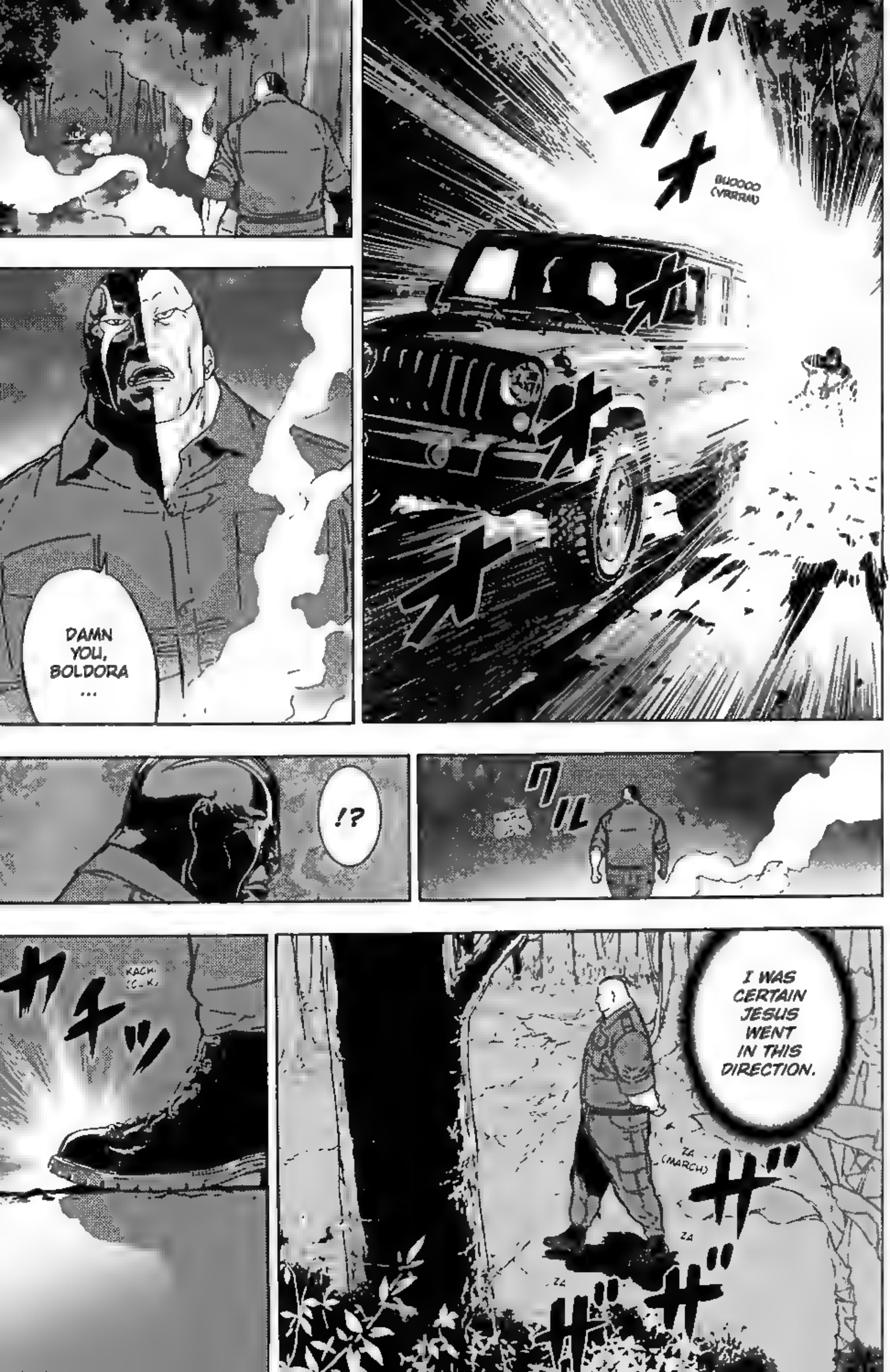

HNN !?
カアアアッ
KAAA (FLASH)
BSHAA
BSHAA

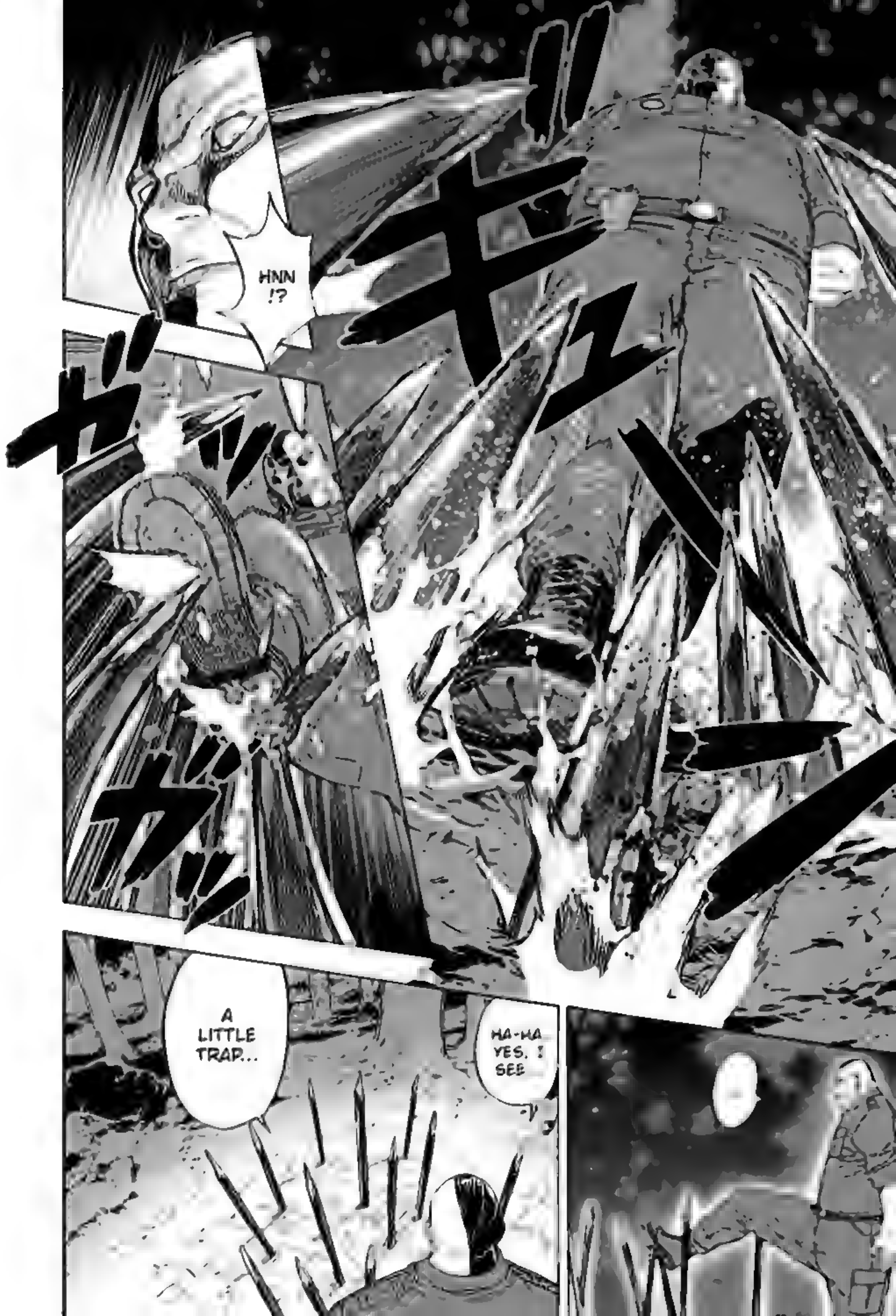
Until Death do us Part

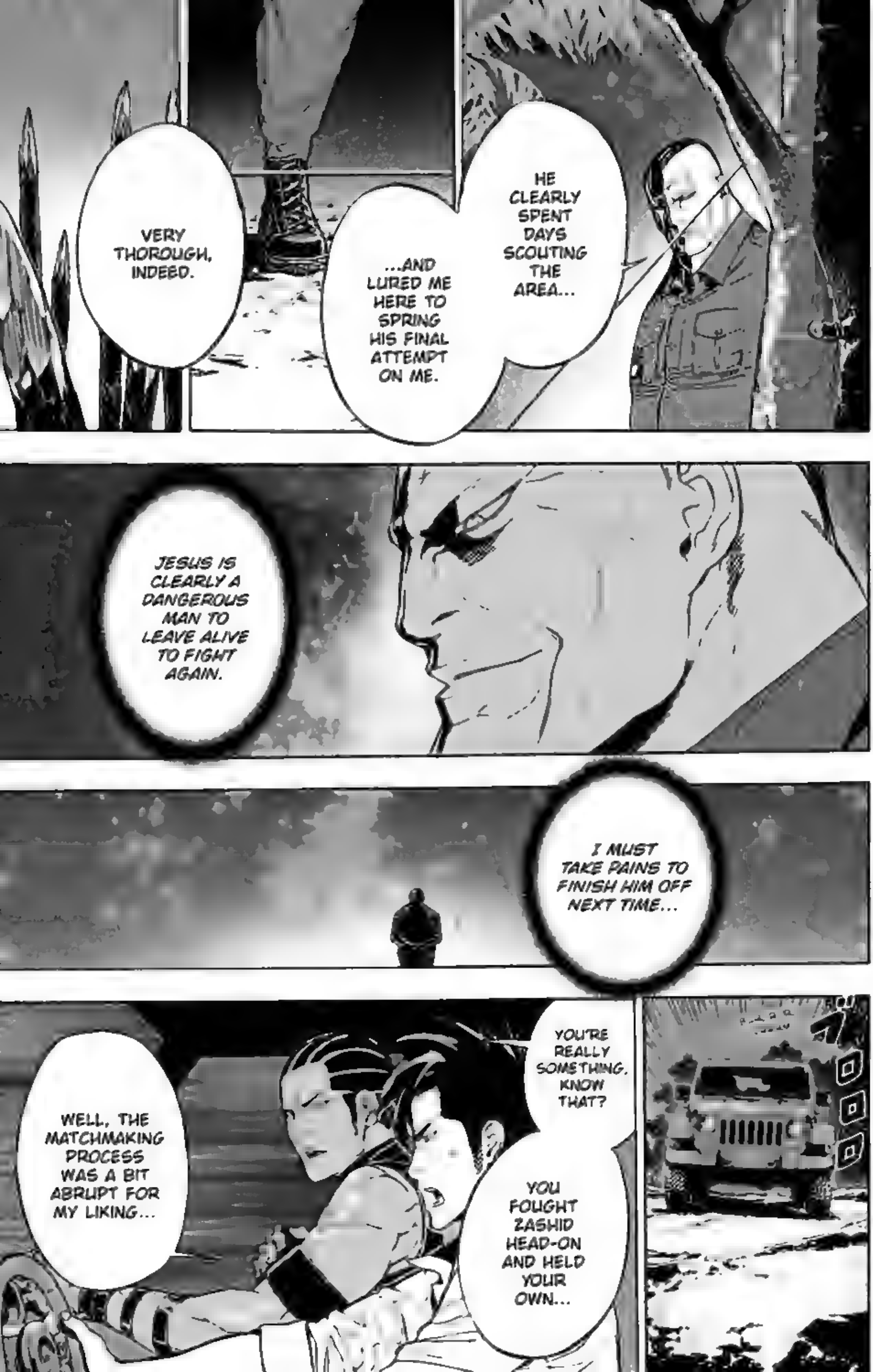
chapter 196

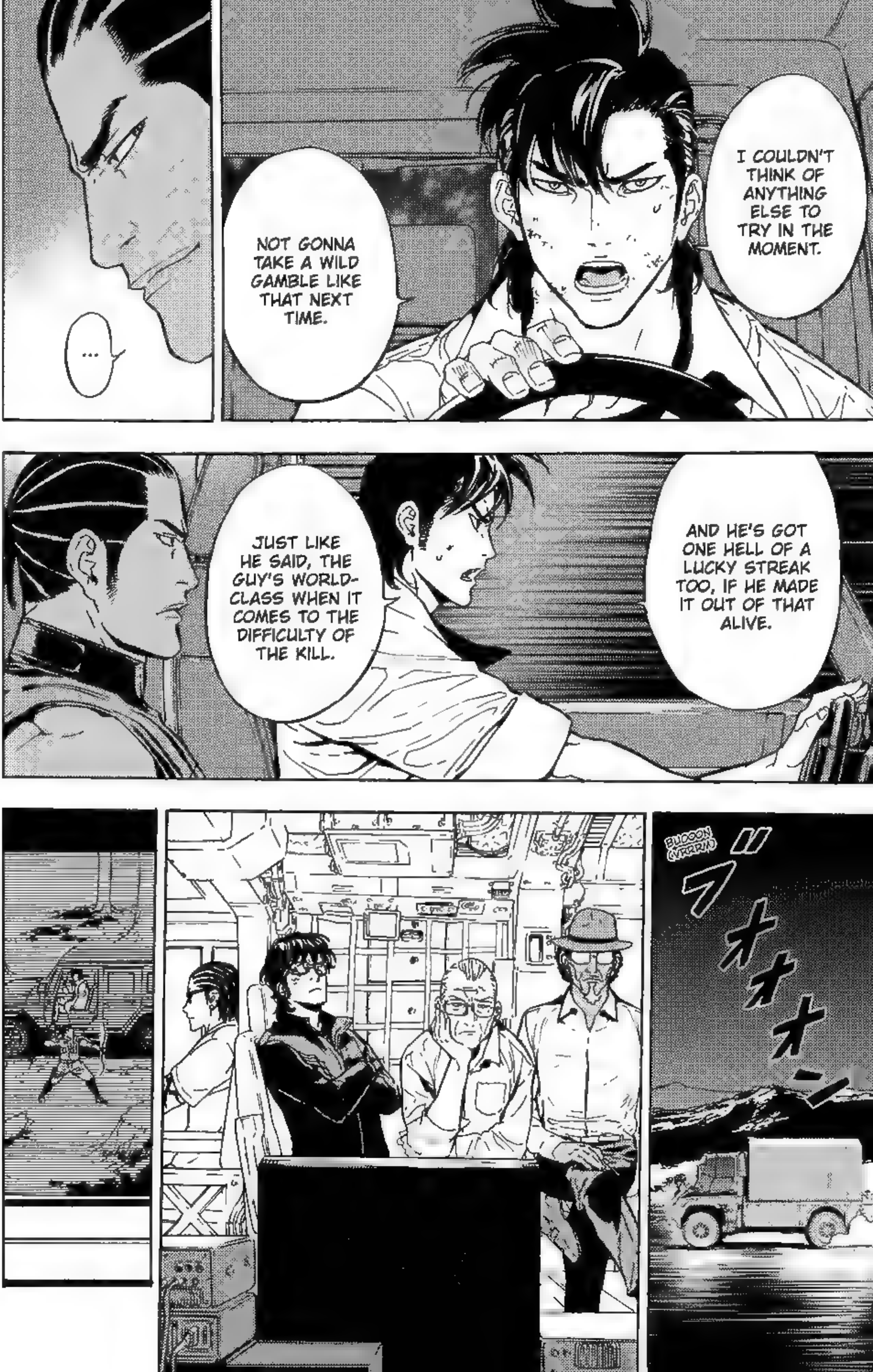

B-SHU
(SHOOM)
GASHI
(SNAG)
YOU LITTLE RAT!
DRIVE, DRIVE!
DA
(SHOVE)

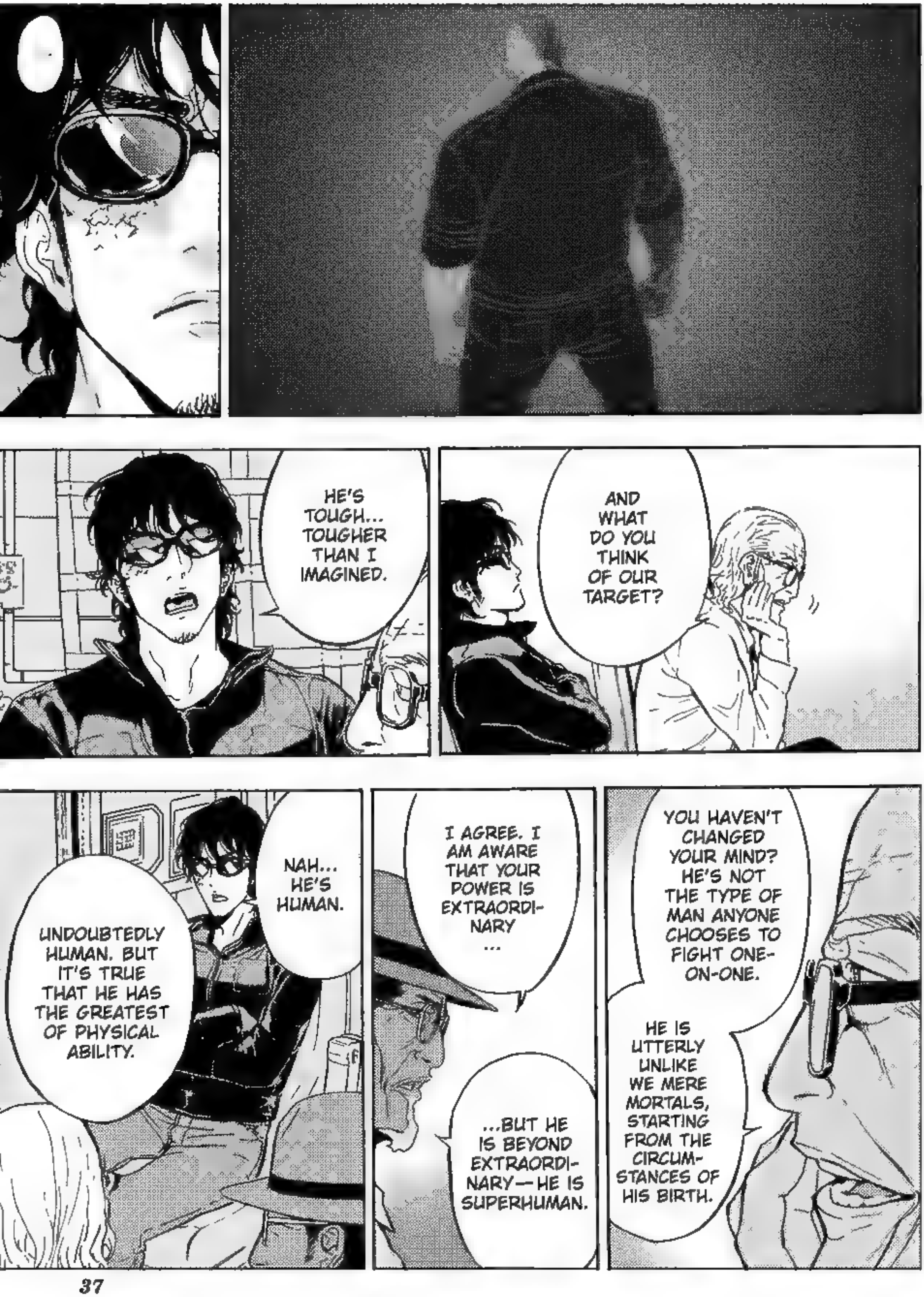

BISHU
(BZAP)
ザッ
ZA
SHUK
ザッ
ZA
NWAH
!!

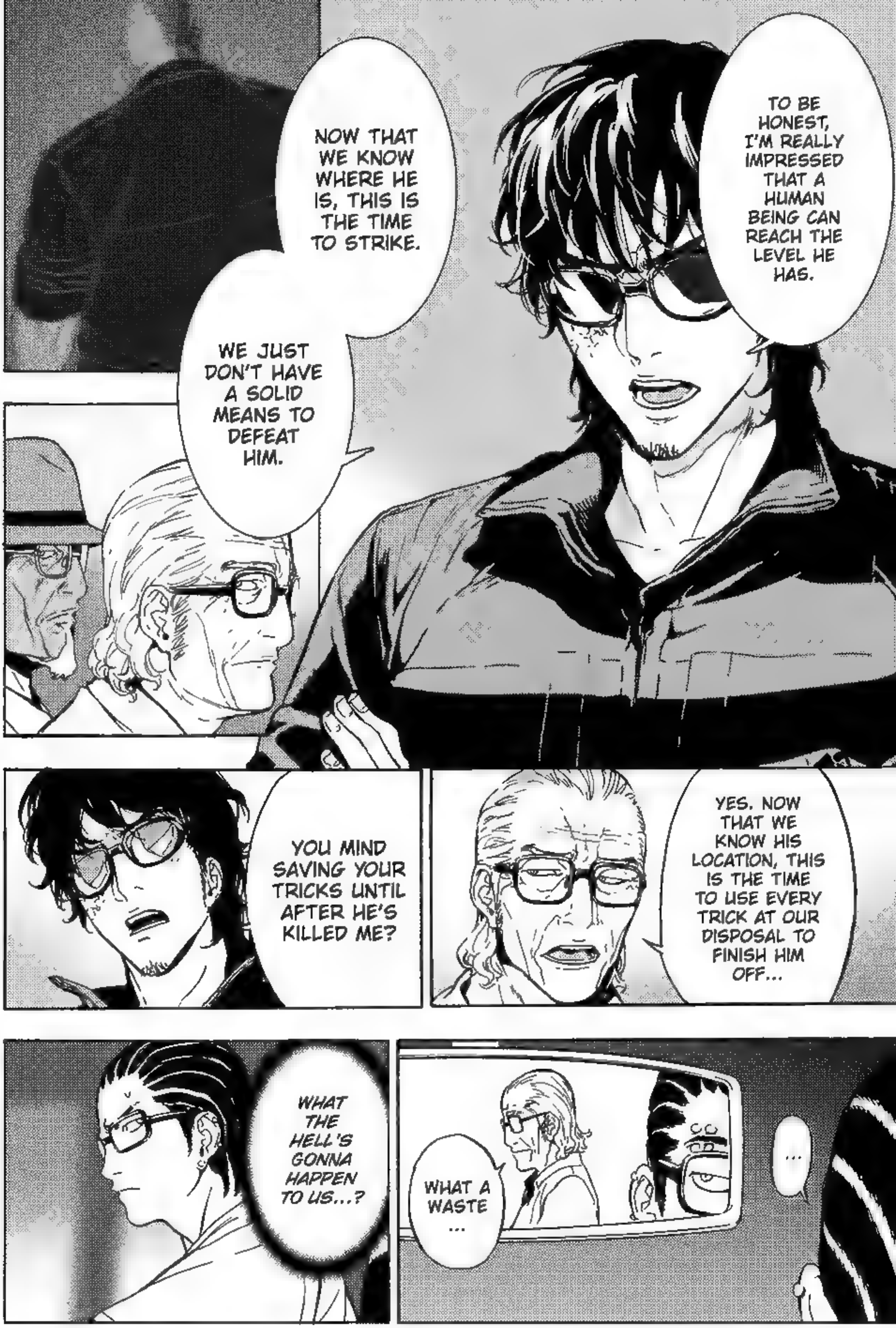

ブオオオオオ
BUOOOO (VRRRM)
DAMN YOU, BOLDORA ...
クル
!?
I WAS CERTAIN JESUS WENT IN THIS DIRECTION.
ザ
ZA (MARCH)
ザ
ZA
ザ
ZA
カチッ
KACHI (CLICK)

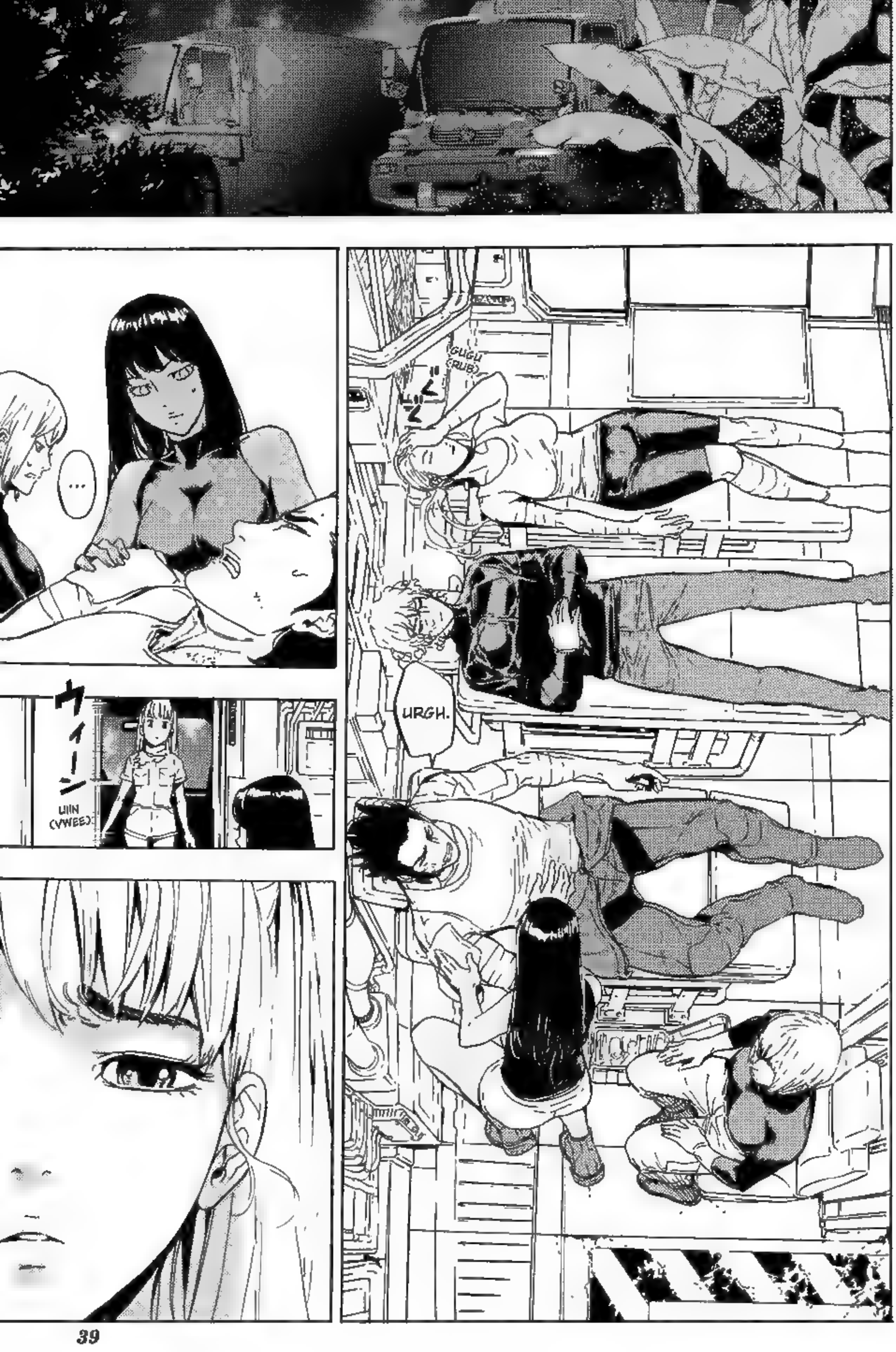

HNN !?
キュ
ガッ
ガッ
HA-HA YES, I SEE
A LITTLE TRAP...

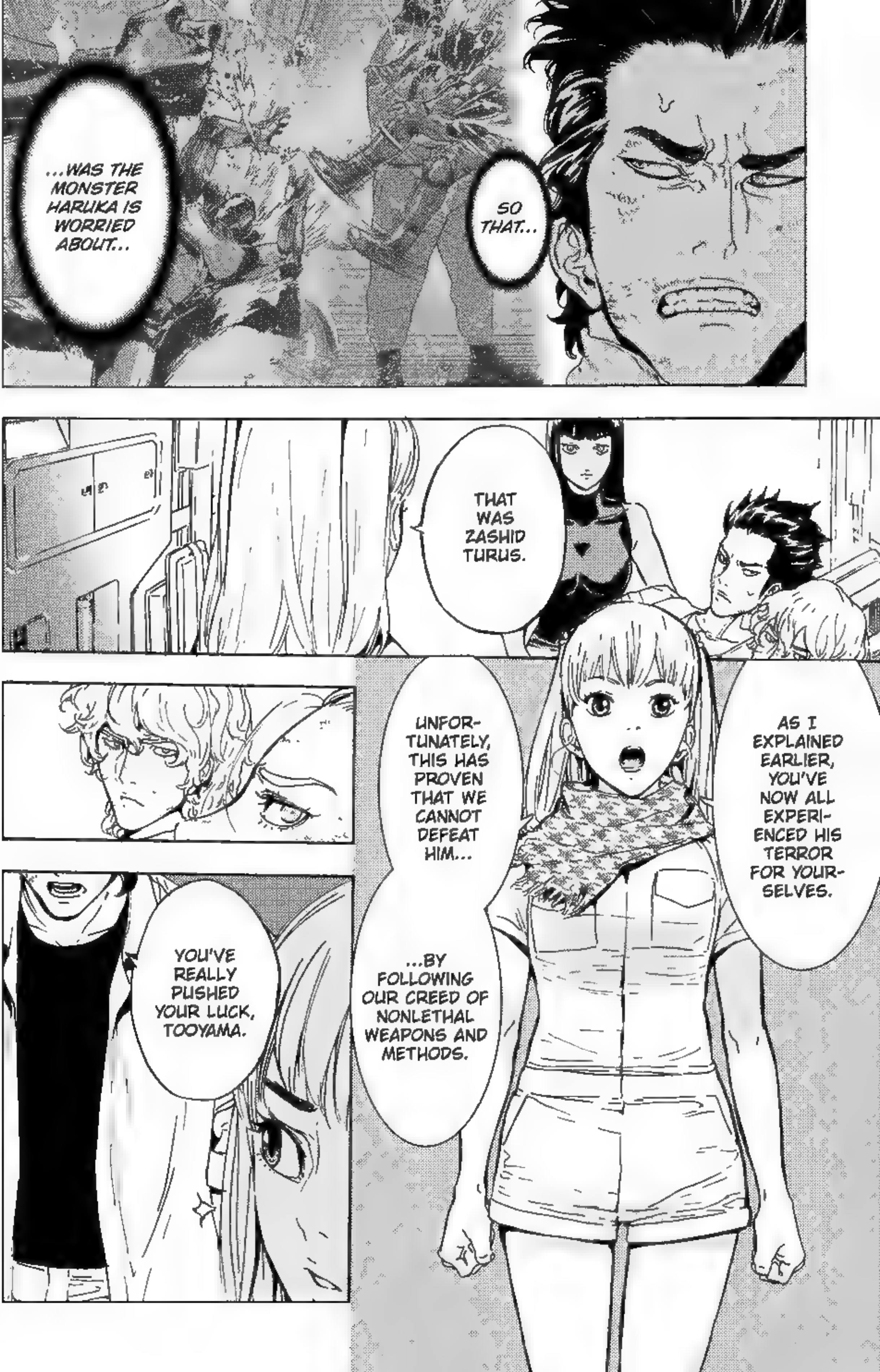

HE CLEARLY SPENT DAYS SCOUTING THE AREA...
...AND LURED ME HERE TO SPRING HIS FINAL ATTEMPT ON ME.
VERY THOROUGH, INDEED.
JESUS IS CLEARLY A DANGEROUS MAN TO LEAVE ALIVE TO FIGHT AGAIN.
I MUST TAKE PAINS TO FINISH HIM OFF NEXT TIME...
YOU'RE REALLY SOMETHING, KNOW THAT?
YOU FOUGHT ZASHID HEAD-ON AND HELD YOUR OWN...
WELL, THE MATCHMAKING PROCESS WAS A BIT ABRUPT FOR MY LIKING...

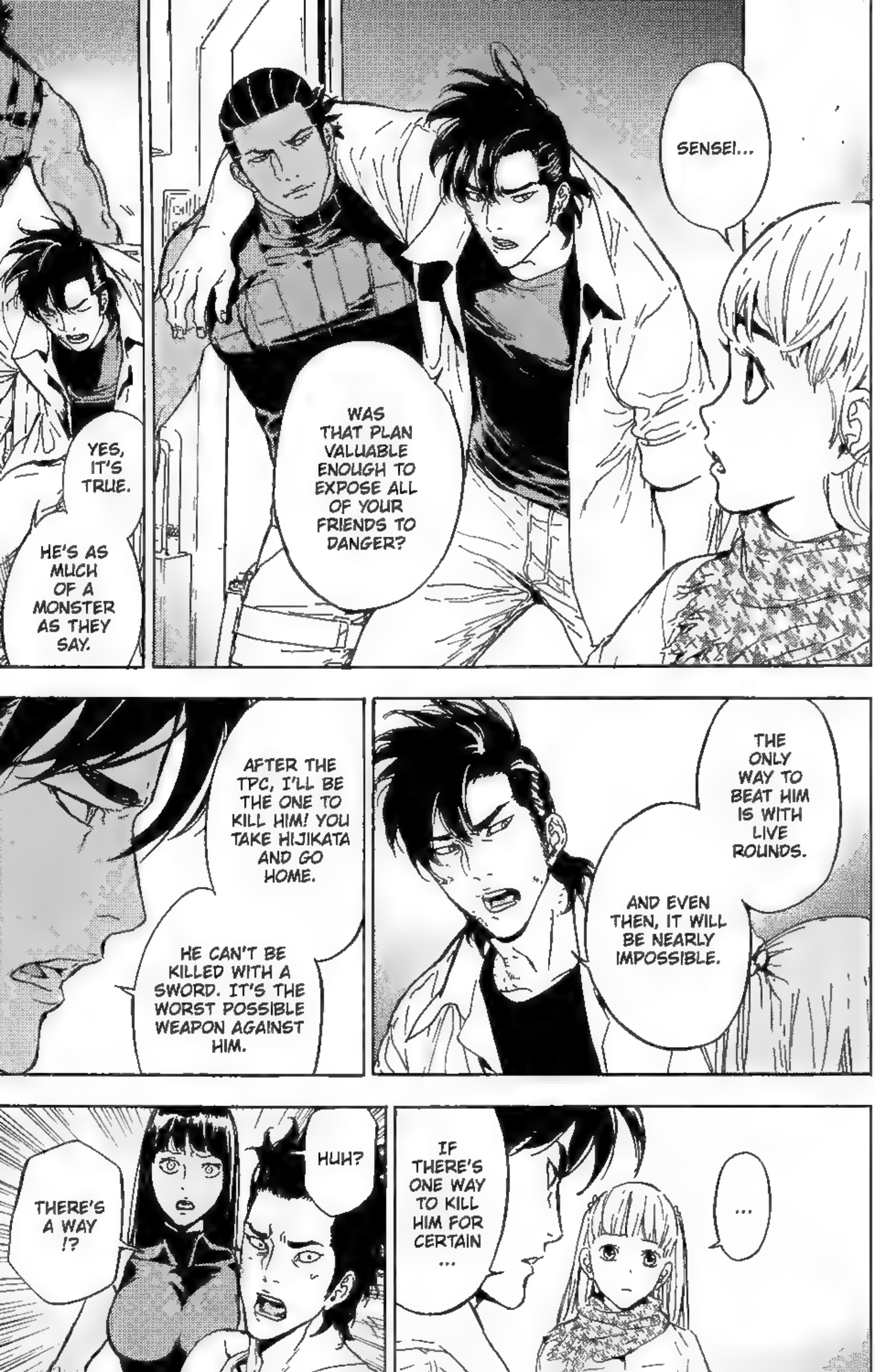

I COULDN'T THINK OF ANYTHING ELSE TO TRY IN THE MOMENT.
NOT GONNA TAKE A WILD GAMBLE LIKE THAT NEXT TIME.
...
JUST LIKE HE SAID, THE GUY'S WORLD-CLASS WHEN IT COMES TO THE DIFFICULTY OF THE KILL.
AND HE'S GOT ONE HELL OF A LUCKY STREAK TOO, IF HE MADE IT OUT OF THAT ALIVE.
ブォオオーン
BUOOON (VRRRM)

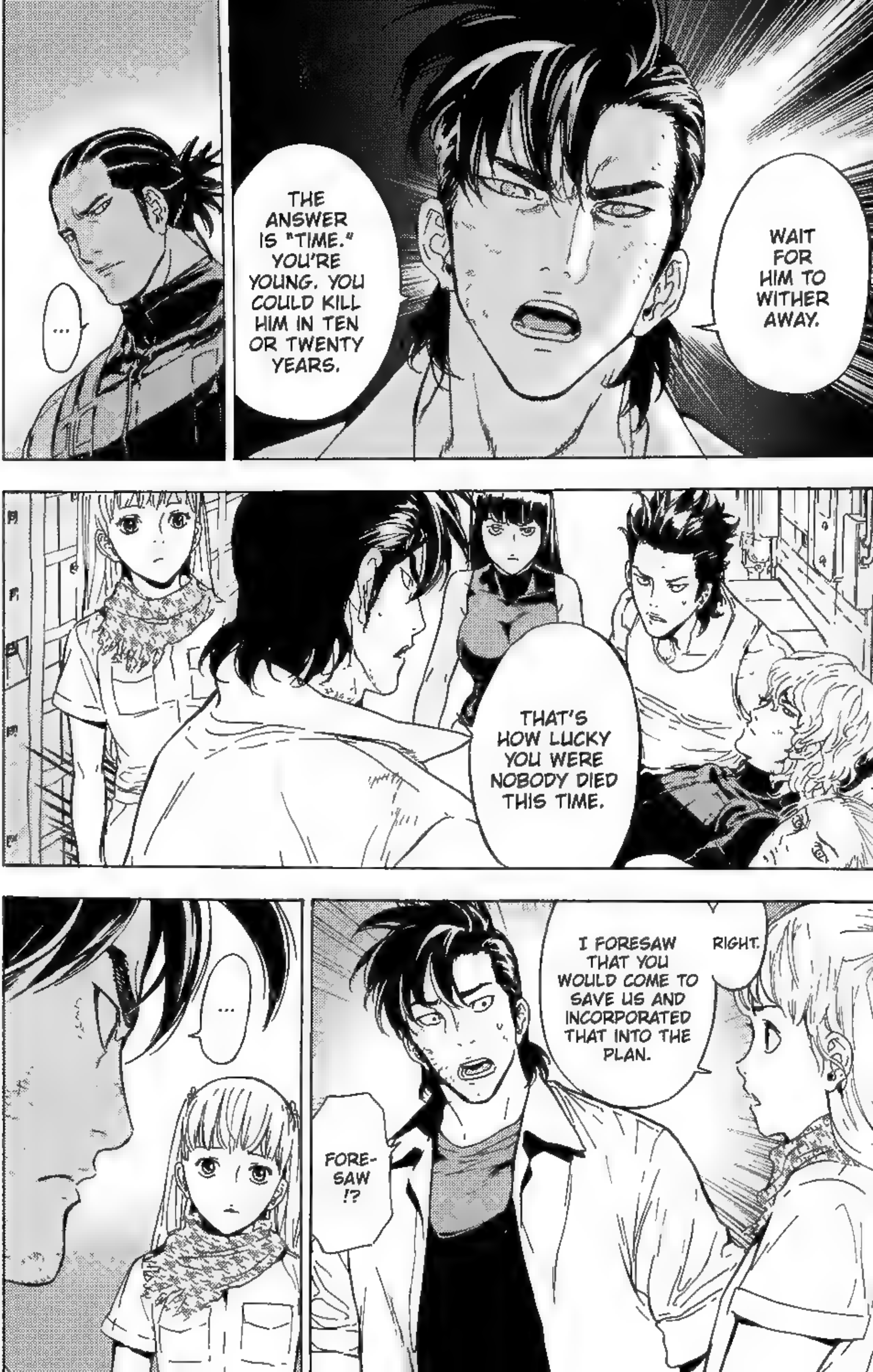

AND WHAT DO YOU THINK OF OUR TARGET?
HE'S TOUGH... TOUGHER THAN I IMAGINED.
YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED YOUR MIND? HE'S NOT THE TYPE OF MAN ANYONE CHOOSES TO FIGHT ONE-ON-ONE.
HE IS UTTERLY UNLIKE WE MERE MORTALS, STARTING FROM THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS BIRTH.
I AGREE. I AM AWARE THAT YOUR POWER IS EXTRAORDINARY...
...BUT HE IS BEYOND EXTRAORDINARY—HE IS SUPERHUMAN.
NAH... HE'S HUMAN.
UNDOUBTEDLY HUMAN. BUT IT'S TRUE THAT HE HAS THE GREATEST OF PHYSICAL ABILITY.

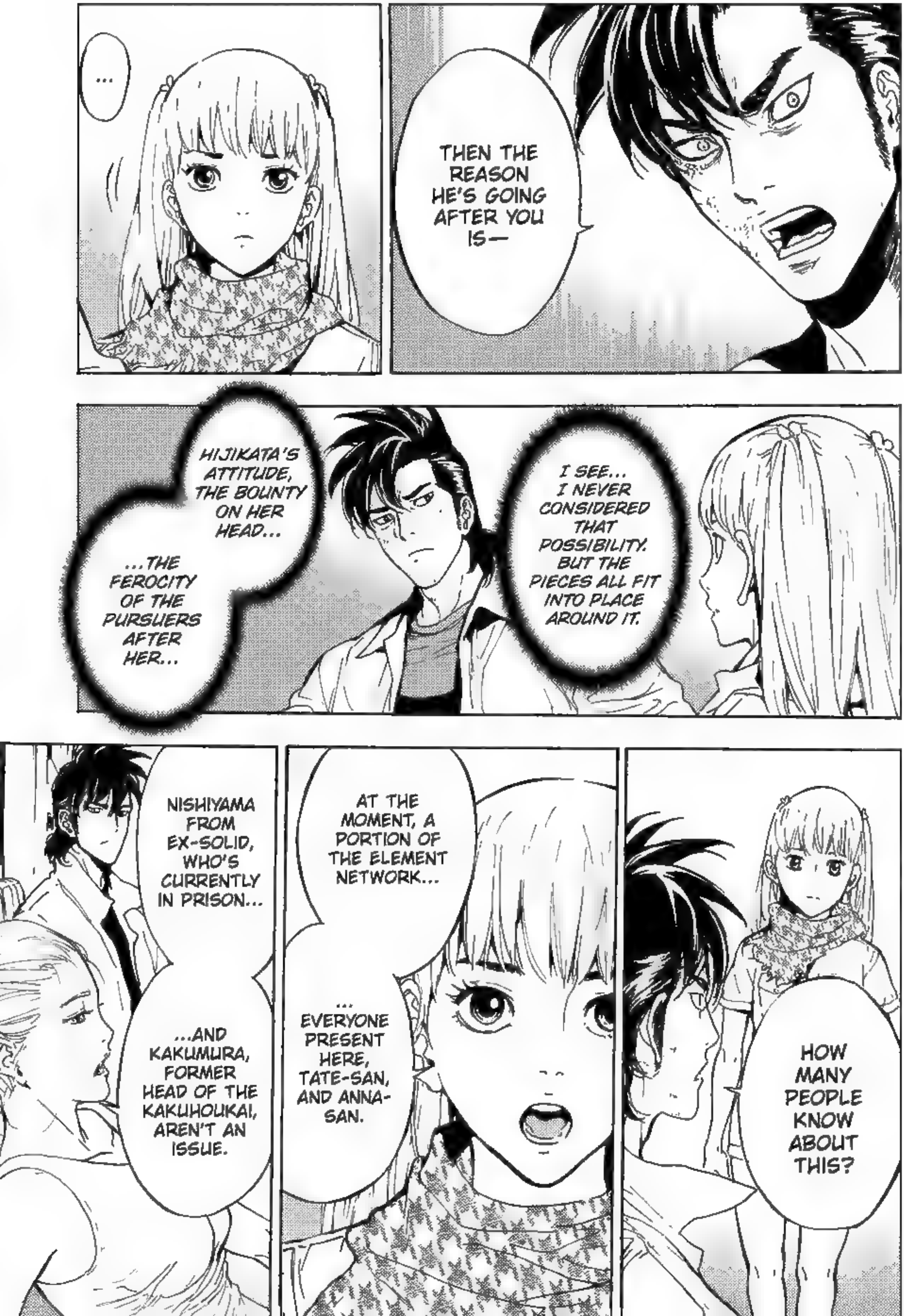

TO BE HONEST, I'M REALLY IMPRESSED THAT A HUMAN BEING CAN REACH THE LEVEL HE HAS.
NOW THAT WE KNOW WHERE HE IS, THIS IS THE TIME TO STRIKE.
WE JUST DON'T HAVE A SOLID MEANS TO DEFEAT HIM.
YES. NOW THAT WE KNOW HIS LOCATION, THIS IS THE TIME TO USE EVERY TRICK AT OUR DISPOSAL TO FINISH HIM OFF...
YOU MIND SAVING YOUR TRICKS UNTIL AFTER HE'S KILLED ME?
...
WHAT A WASTE ...
WHAT THE HELL'S GONNA HAPPEN TO US...?

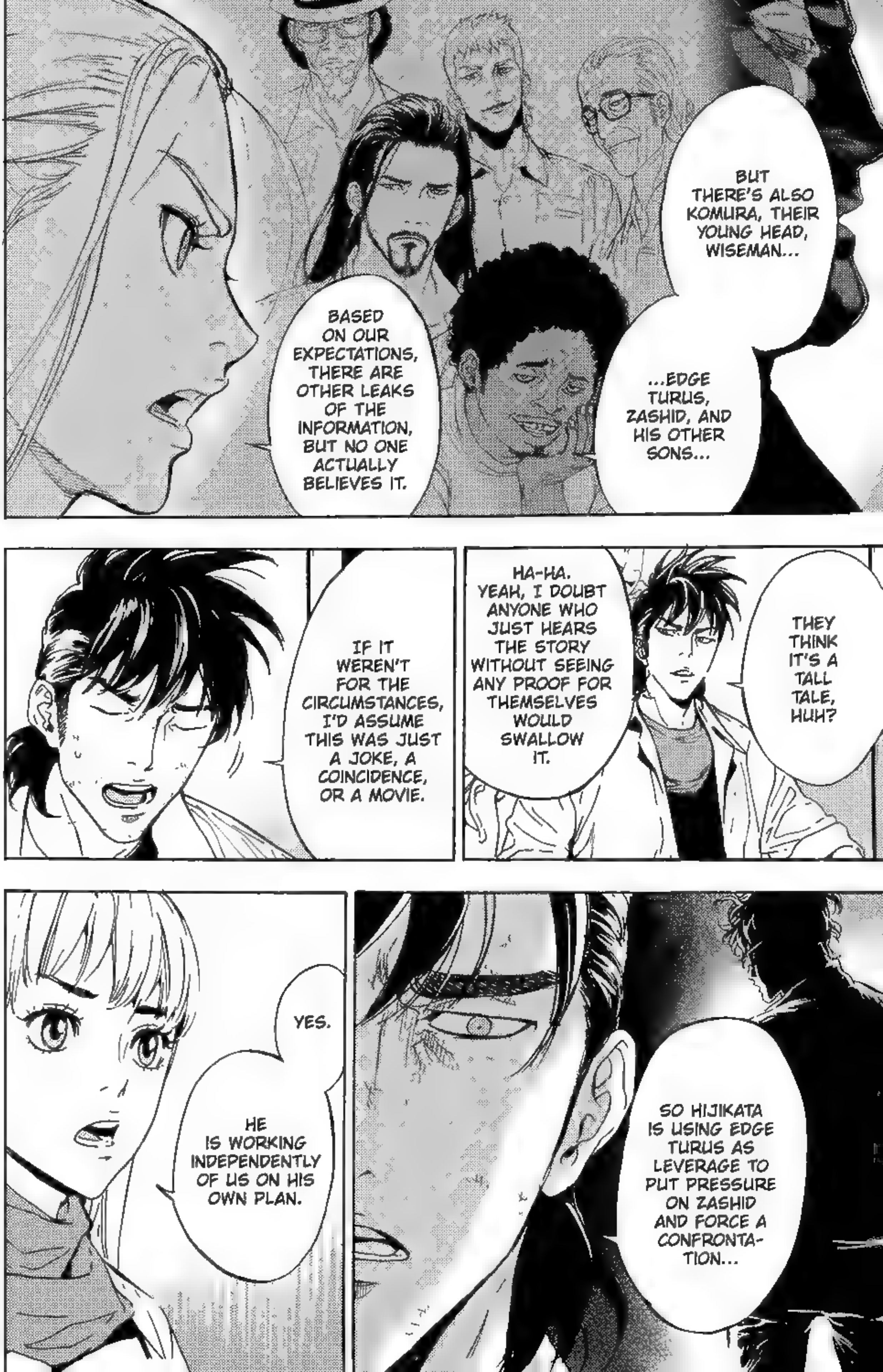

GUGU
(RUB)
URGH.
...
ウィーン
UIIN
(VWEE)

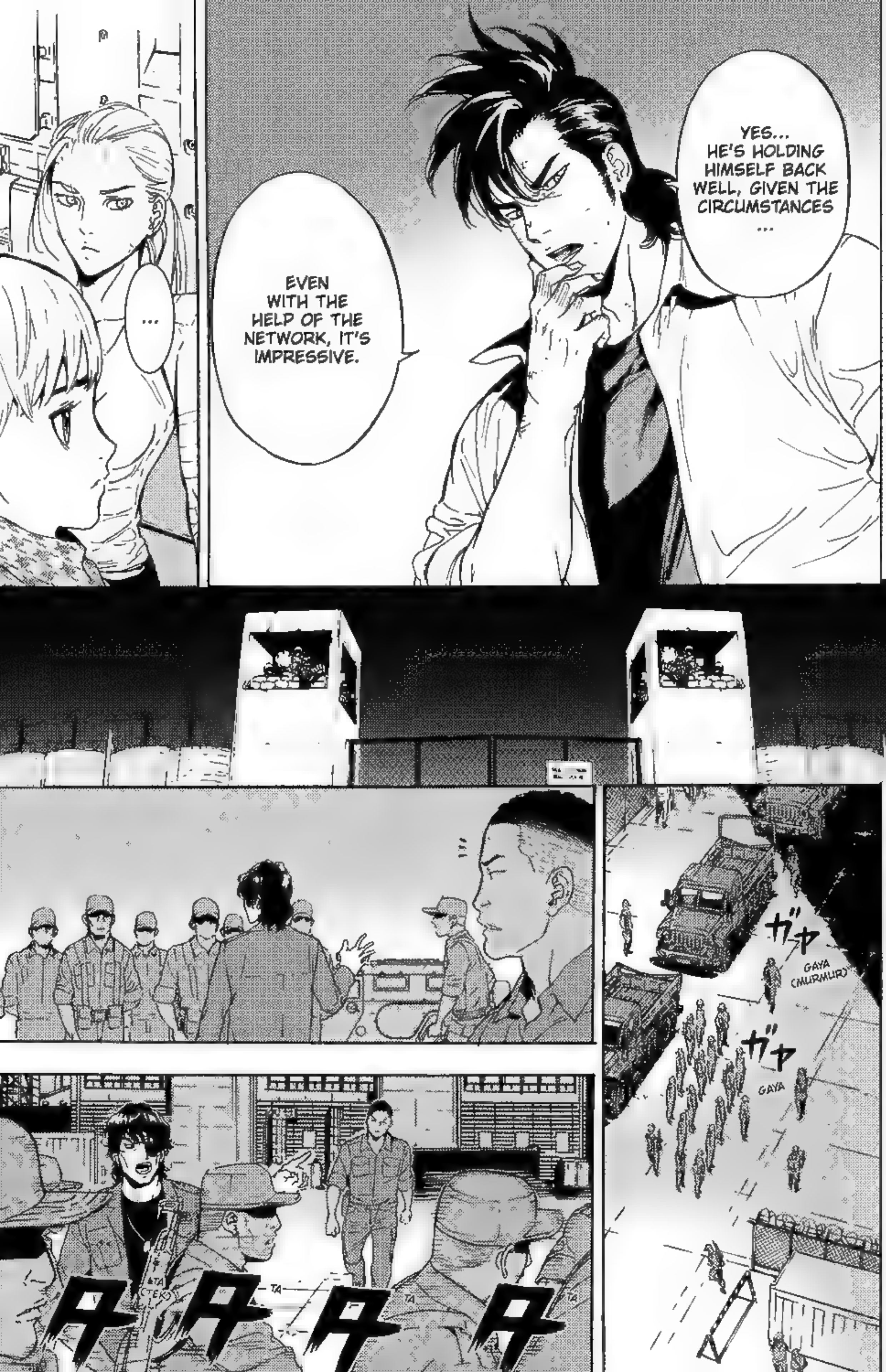

SO THAT...
...WAS THE MONSTER HARUKA IS WORRIED ABOUT...
THAT WAS ZASHID TURUS.
AS I EXPLAINED EARLIER, YOU'VE NOW ALL EXPERIENCED HIS TERROR FOR YOURSELVES.
UNFORTUNATELY, THIS HAS PROVEN THAT WE CANNOT DEFEAT HIM...
...BY FOLLOWING OUR CREED OF NONLETHAL WEAPONS AND METHODS.
YOU'VE REALLY PUSHED YOUR LUCK, TOOYAMA.

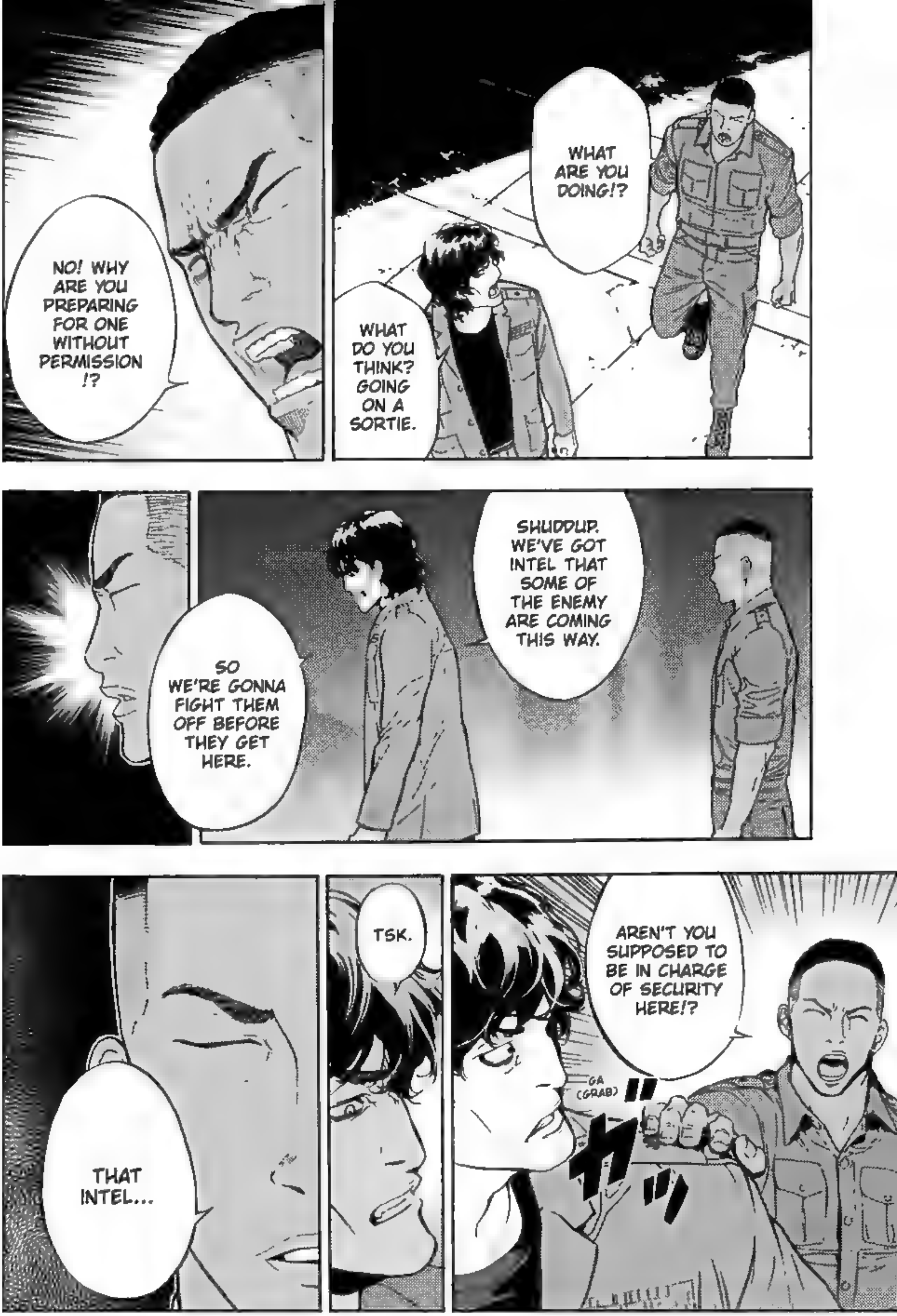

SENSEI...
WAS THAT PLAN VALUABLE ENOUGH TO EXPOSE ALL OF YOUR FRIENDS TO DANGER?
YES, IT'S TRUE.
HE'S AS MUCH OF A MONSTER AS THEY SAY.
THE ONLY WAY TO BEAT HIM IS WITH LIVE ROUNDS.
AND EVEN THEN, IT WILL BE NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE.
AFTER THE TPC, I'LL BE THE ONE TO KILL HIM! YOU TAKE HIJIKATA AND GO HOME.
HE CAN'T BE KILLED WITH A SWORD. IT'S THE WORST POSSIBLE WEAPON AGAINST HIM.
...
IF THERE'S ONE WAY TO KILL HIM FOR CERTAIN...
HUH?
THERE'S A WAY!?

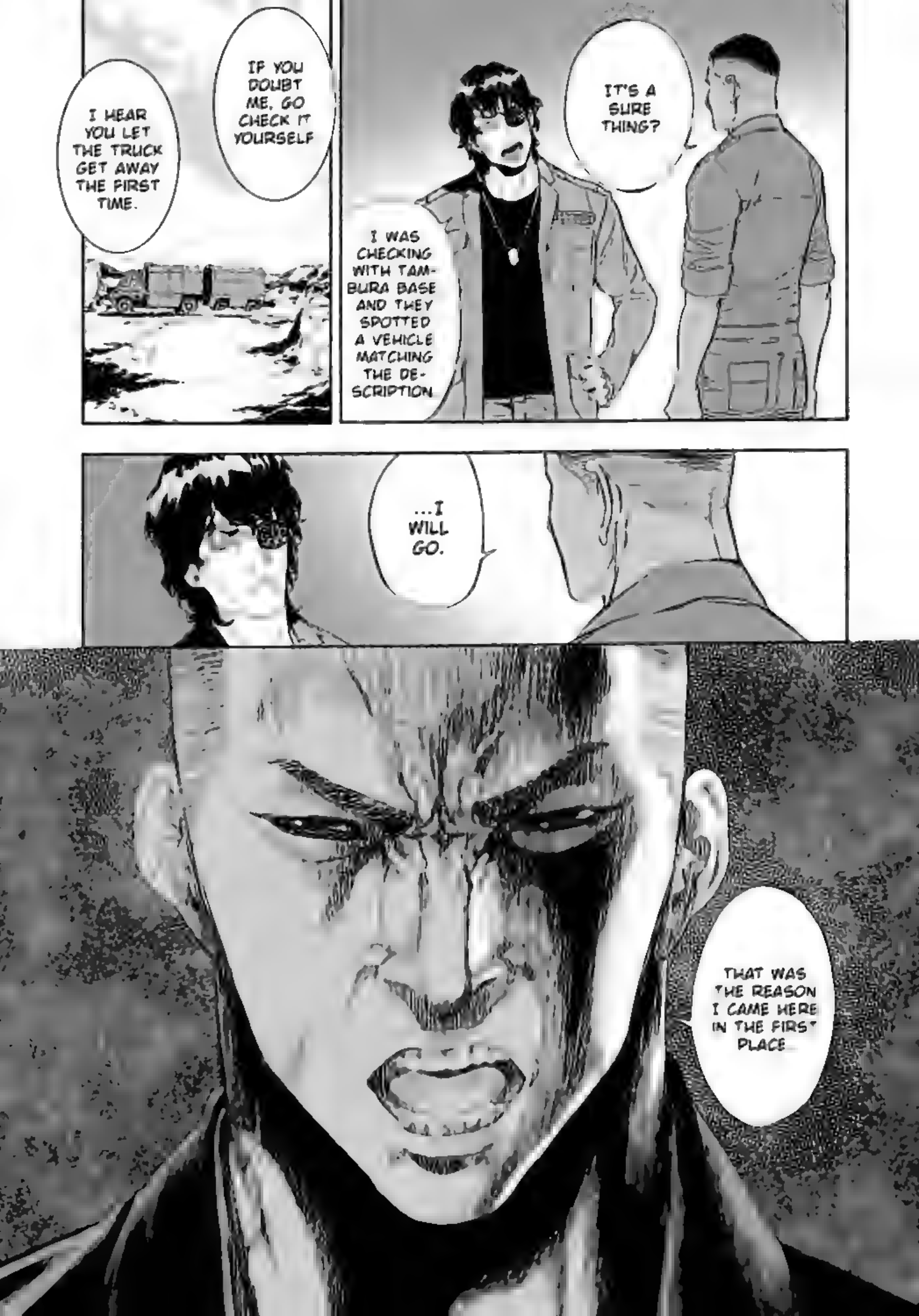

WAIT FOR HIM TO WITHER AWAY.
THE ANSWER IS "TIME." YOU'RE YOUNG. YOU COULD KILL HIM IN TEN OR TWENTY YEARS.
...
THAT'S HOW LUCKY YOU WERE NOBODY DIED THIS TIME.
RIGHT.
I FORESAW THAT YOU WOULD COME TO SAVE US AND INCORPORATED THAT INTO THE PLAN.
FORESAW!?
...

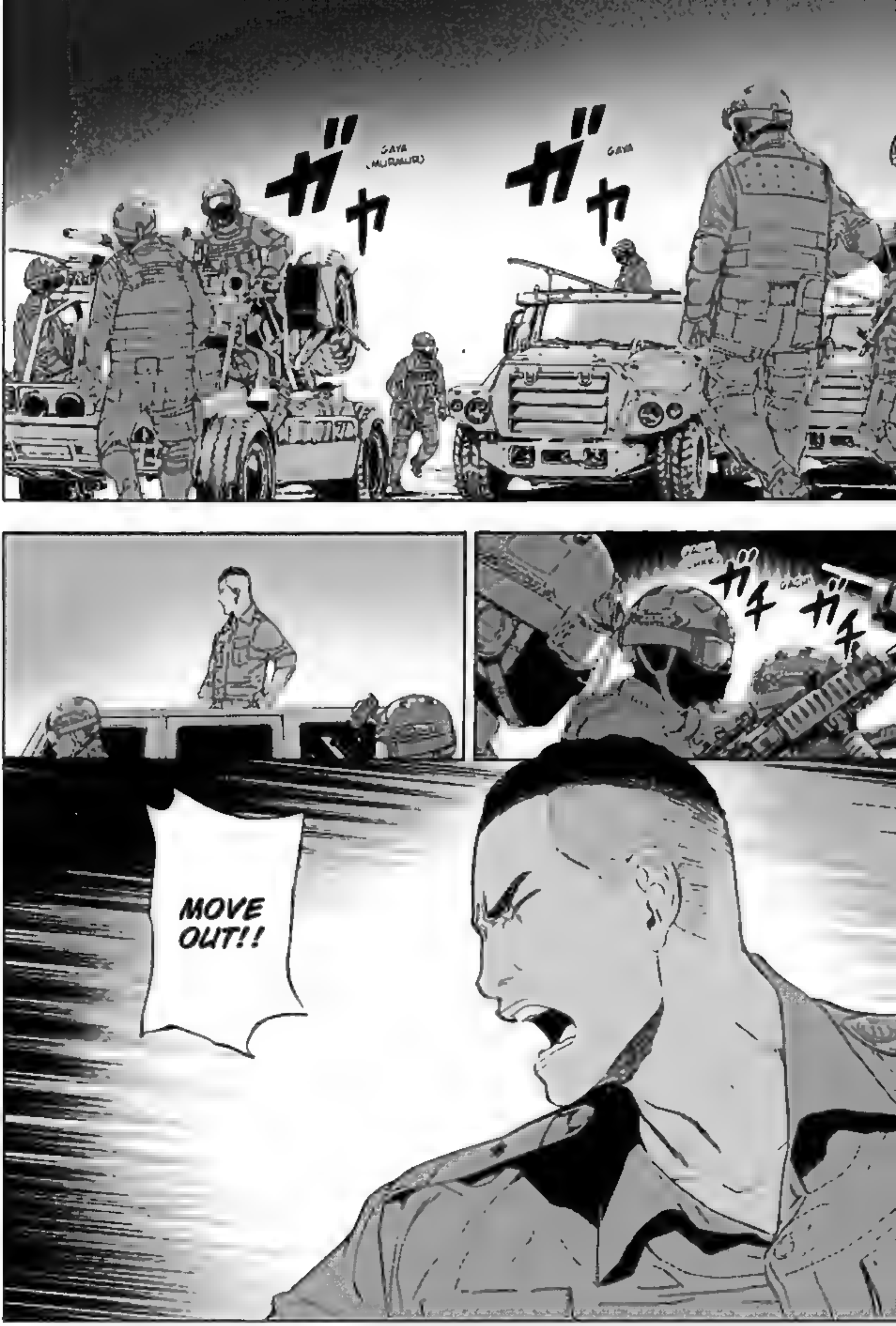

THEN THE REASON HE'S GOING AFTER YOU IS—
...
I SEE... I NEVER CONSIDERED THAT POSSIBILITY. BUT THE PIECES ALL FIT INTO PLACE AROUND IT.
HIJIKATA'S ATTITUDE, THE BOUNTY ON HER HEAD...
...THE FEROCITY OF THE PURSUERS AFTER HER...
HOW MANY PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT THIS?
AT THE MOMENT, A PORTION OF THE ELEMENT NETWORK...
...EVERYONE PRESENT HERE, TATE-SAN, AND ANNA-SAN.
NISHIYAMA FROM EX-SOLID, WHO'S CURRENTLY IN PRISON...
...AND KAKUMURA, FORMER HEAD OF THE KAKUHOUKAI, AREN'T AN ISSUE.

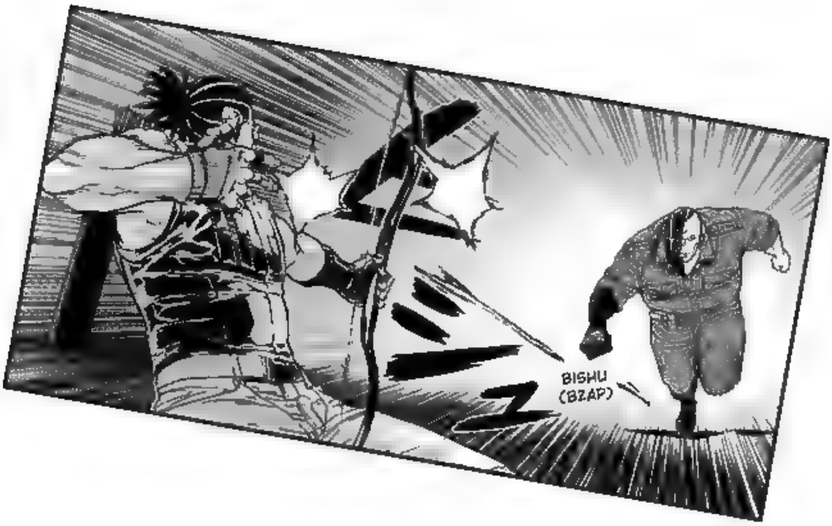

BUT THERE'S ALSO KOMURA, THEIR YOUNG HEAD, WISEMAN...
...EDGE TURUS, ZASHID, AND HIS OTHER SONS...
BASED ON OUR EXPECTATIONS, THERE ARE OTHER LEAKS OF THE INFORMATION, BUT NO ONE ACTUALLY BELIEVES IT.
THEY THINK IT'S A TALL TALE, HUH?
HA-HA. YEAH, I DOUBT ANYONE WHO JUST HEARS THE STORY WITHOUT SEEING ANY PROOF FOR THEMSELVES WOULD SWALLOW IT.
IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE CIRCUMSTANCES, I'D ASSUME THIS WAS JUST A JOKE, A COINCIDENCE, OR A MOVIE.
SO HIJIKATA IS USING EDGE TURUS AS LEVERAGE TO PUT PRESSURE ON ZASHID AND FORCE A CONFRONTATION...
YES.
HE IS WORKING INDEPENDENTLY OF US ON HIS OWN PLAN.


YES... HE'S HOLDING HIMSELF BACK WELL, GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES ...
EVEN WITH THE HELP OF THE NETWORK, IT'S IMPRESSIVE.
...
ガヤ
GAYA (MURMUR)
ガヤ
GAYA
タ
TA (TEK)
タ
TA
タ
TA
タ
TA

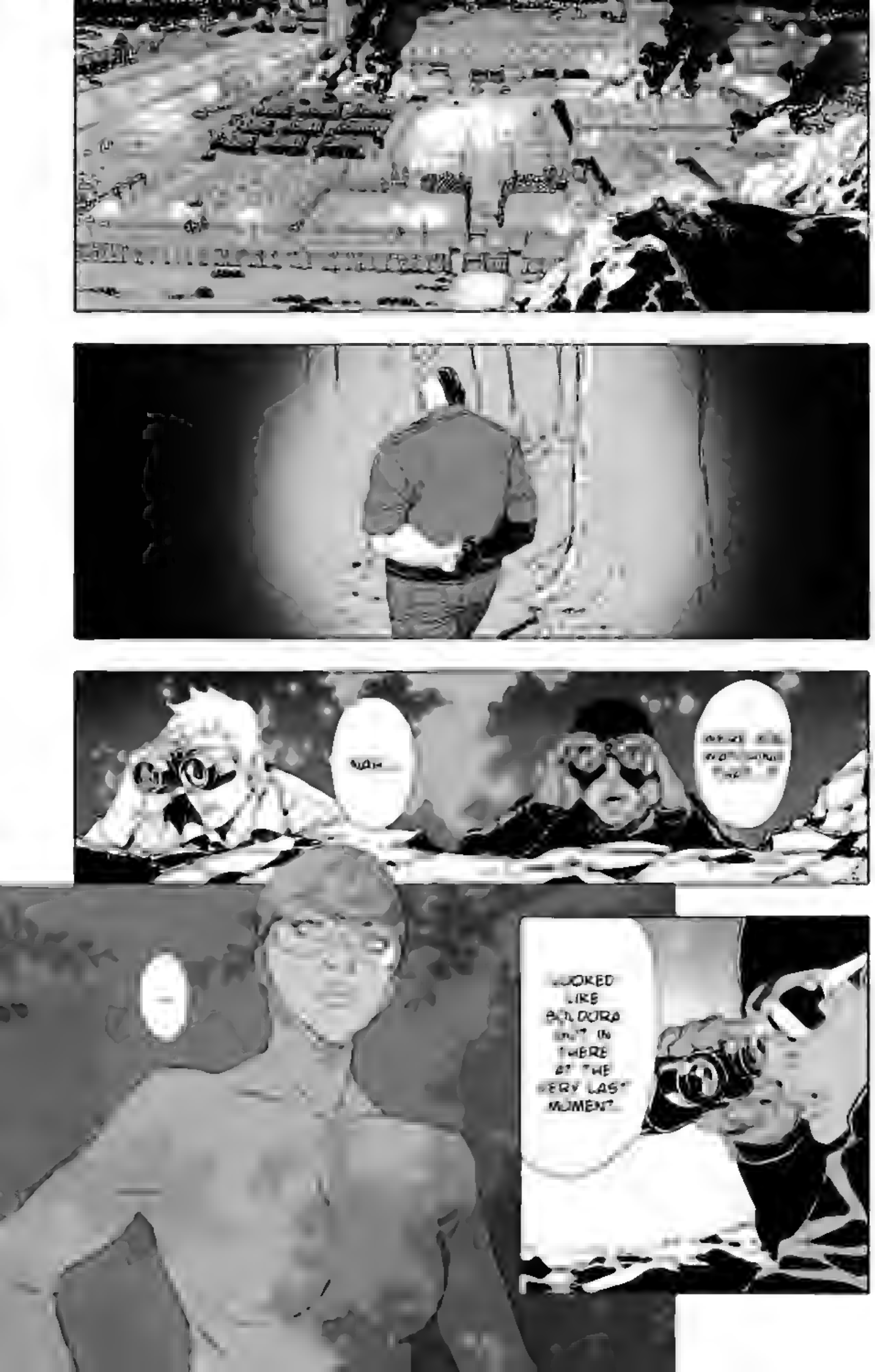

WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?
WHAT DO YOU THINK? GOING ON A SORTIE.
NO! WHY ARE YOU PREPARING FOR ONE WITHOUT PERMISSION!?
SHUDDUP. WE'VE GOT INTEL THAT SOME OF THE ENEMY ARE COMING THIS WAY.
SO WE'RE GONNA FIGHT THEM OFF BEFORE THEY GET HERE.
AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE IN CHARGE OF SECURITY HERE!?
GA (GRAB)
TSK.
THAT INTEL...

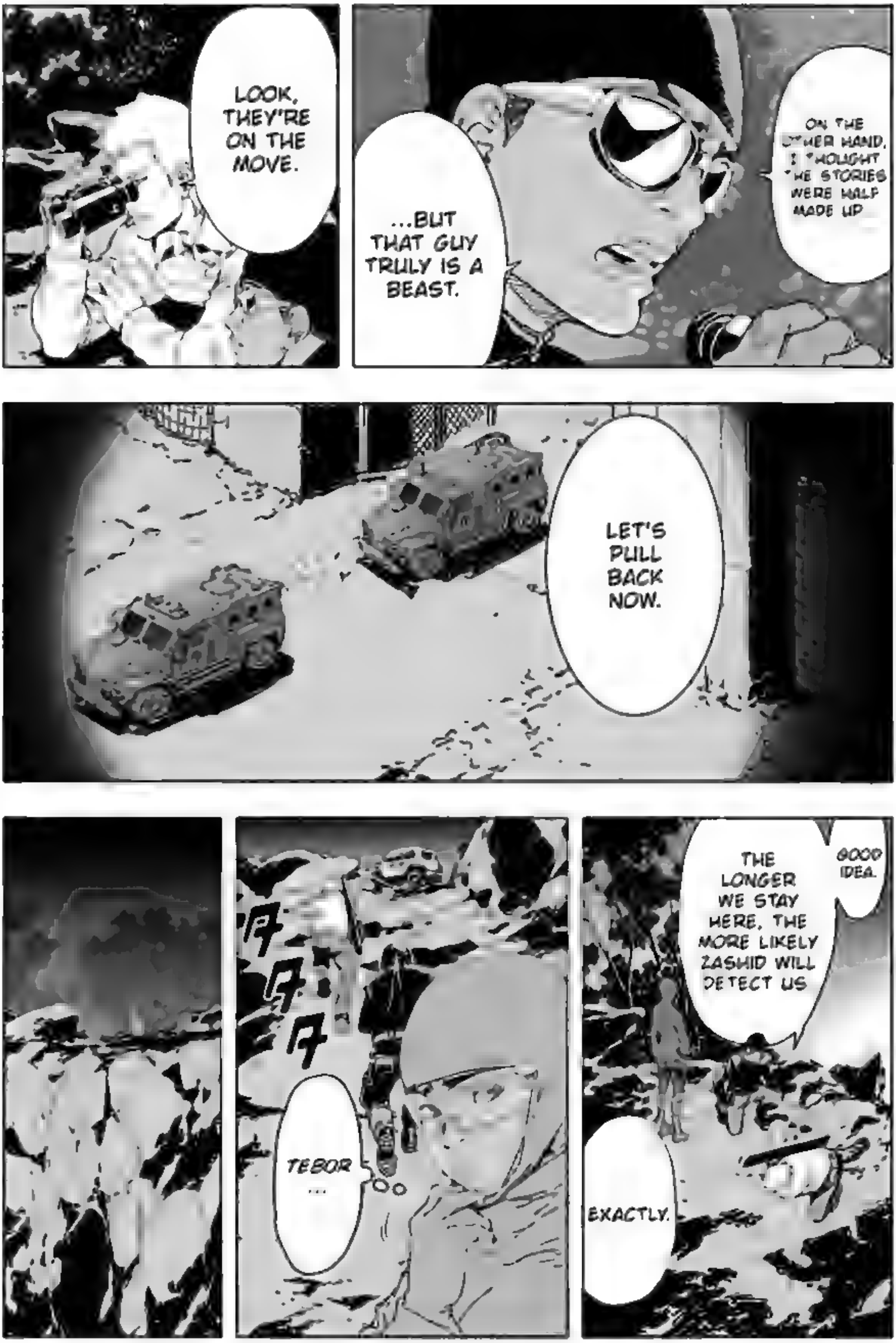

IT'S A SURE THING?
I WAS CHECKING WITH TAMBURA BASE AND THEY SPOTTED A VEHICLE MATCHING THE DESCRIPTION
IF YOU DOUBT ME, GO CHECK IT YOURSELF
I HEAR YOU LET THE TRUCK GET AWAY THE FIRST TIME.
...I WILL GO.
THAT WAS THE REASON I CAME HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE...


ガヤ
GAYA
ガヤ
GAYA (MURMUR)
ガチ
GACHI
ガチ
GACHI (CHAK)
MOVE OUT!!


BISHU
(BZAP)

Until Death do us Part


NAH...
...
LOOKED LIKE PANDORA GOT IN THERE AT THE VERY LAST MOMENT.


ON THE OTHER HAND, I THOUGHT THE STORIES WERE HALF MADE UP...
...BUT THAT GUY TRULY IS A BEAST.
LOOK, THEY'RE ON THE MOVE.
LET'S PULL BACK NOW.
GOOD IDEA.
THE LONGER WE STAY HERE, THE MORE LIKELY ZASHID WILL DETECT US
EXACTLY.
TEBOR ...

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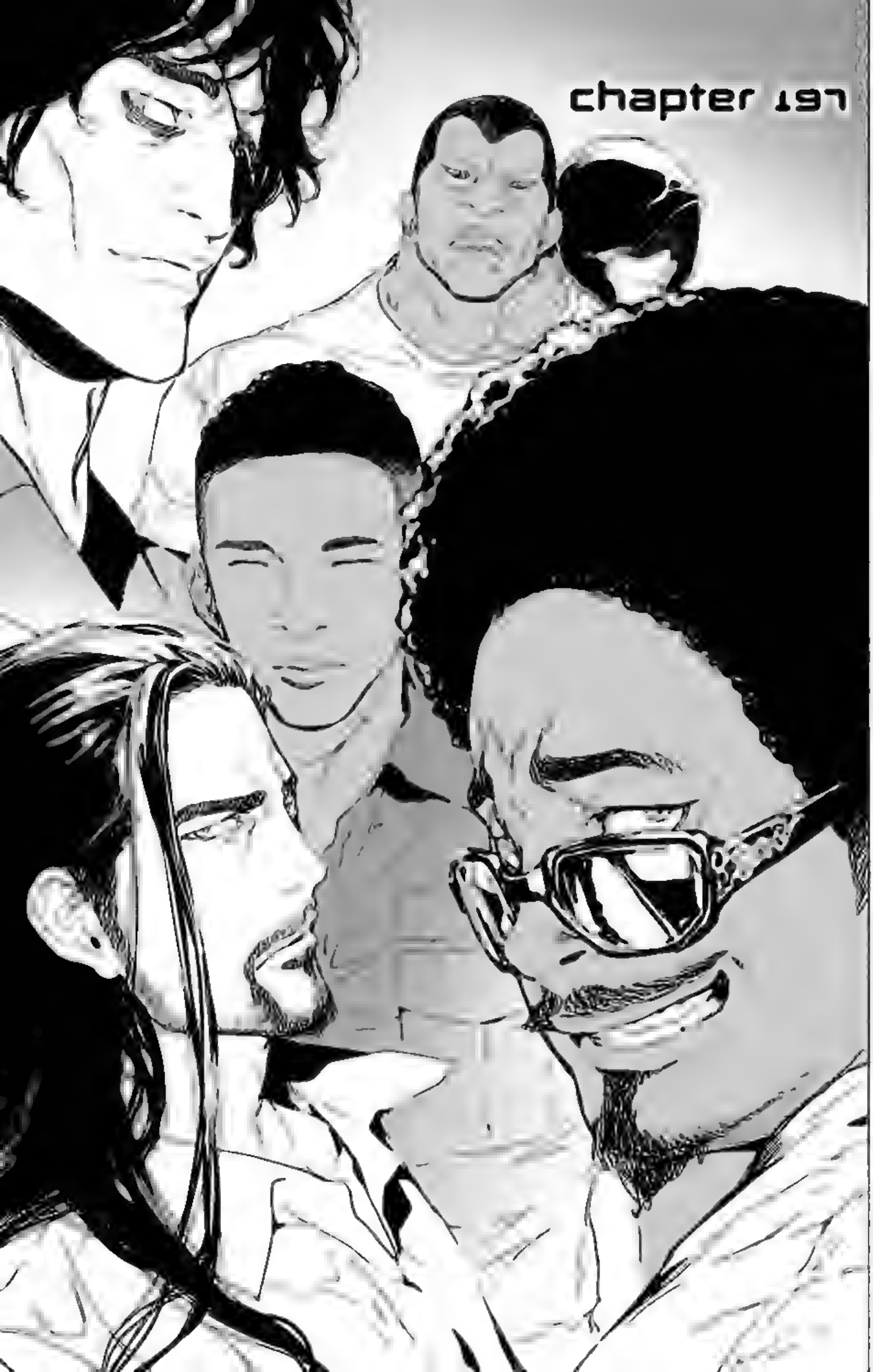
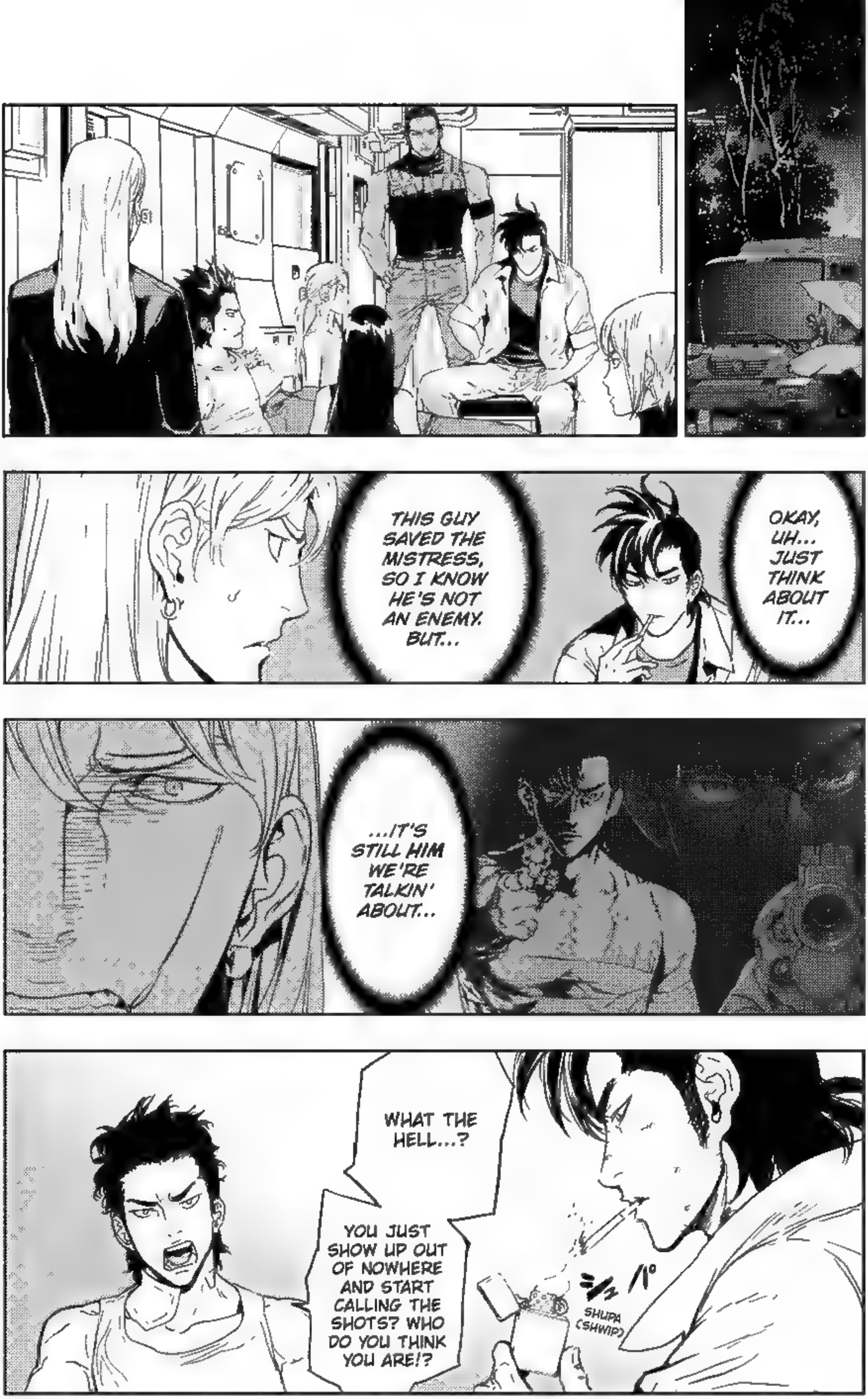
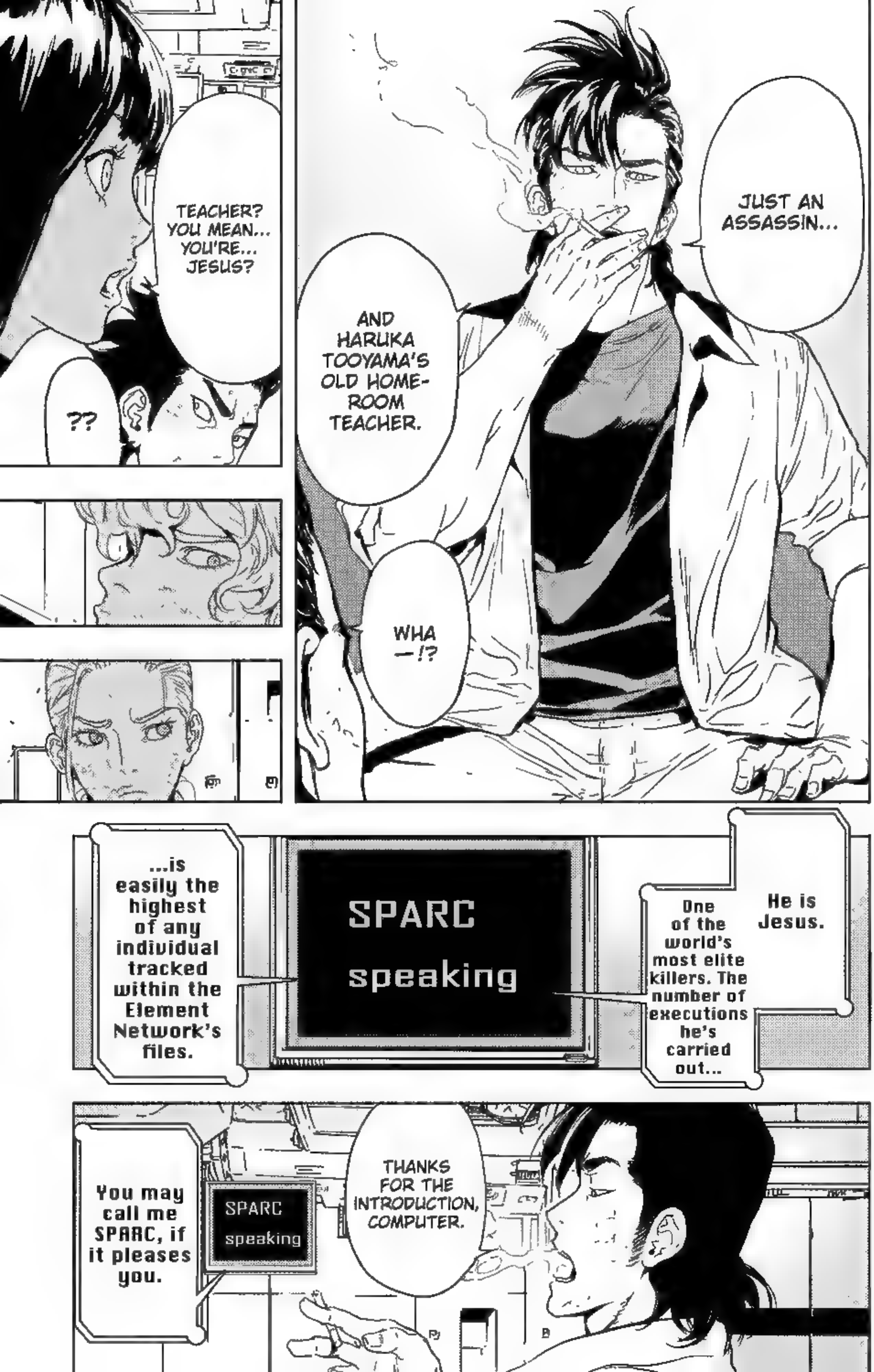
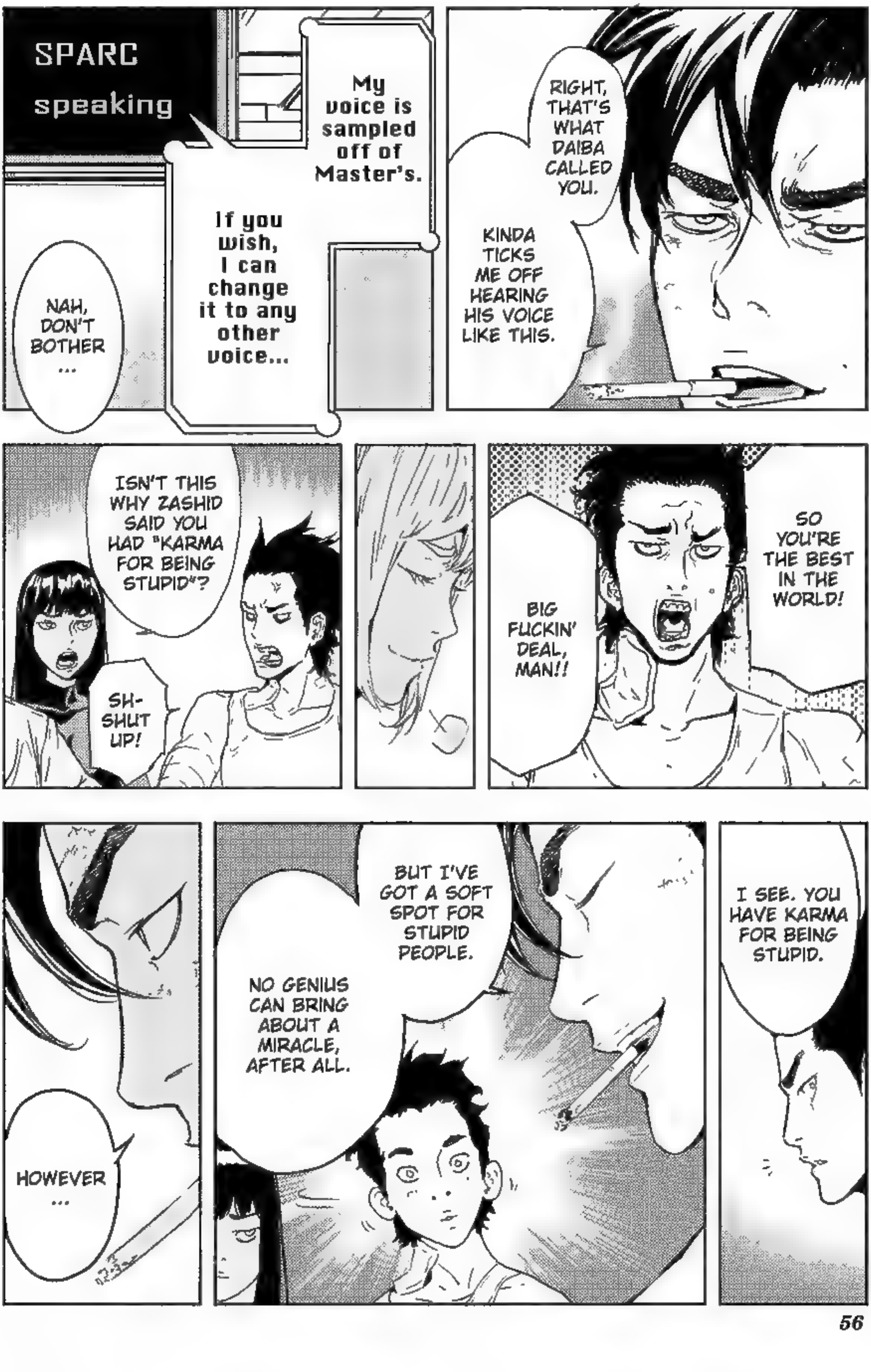
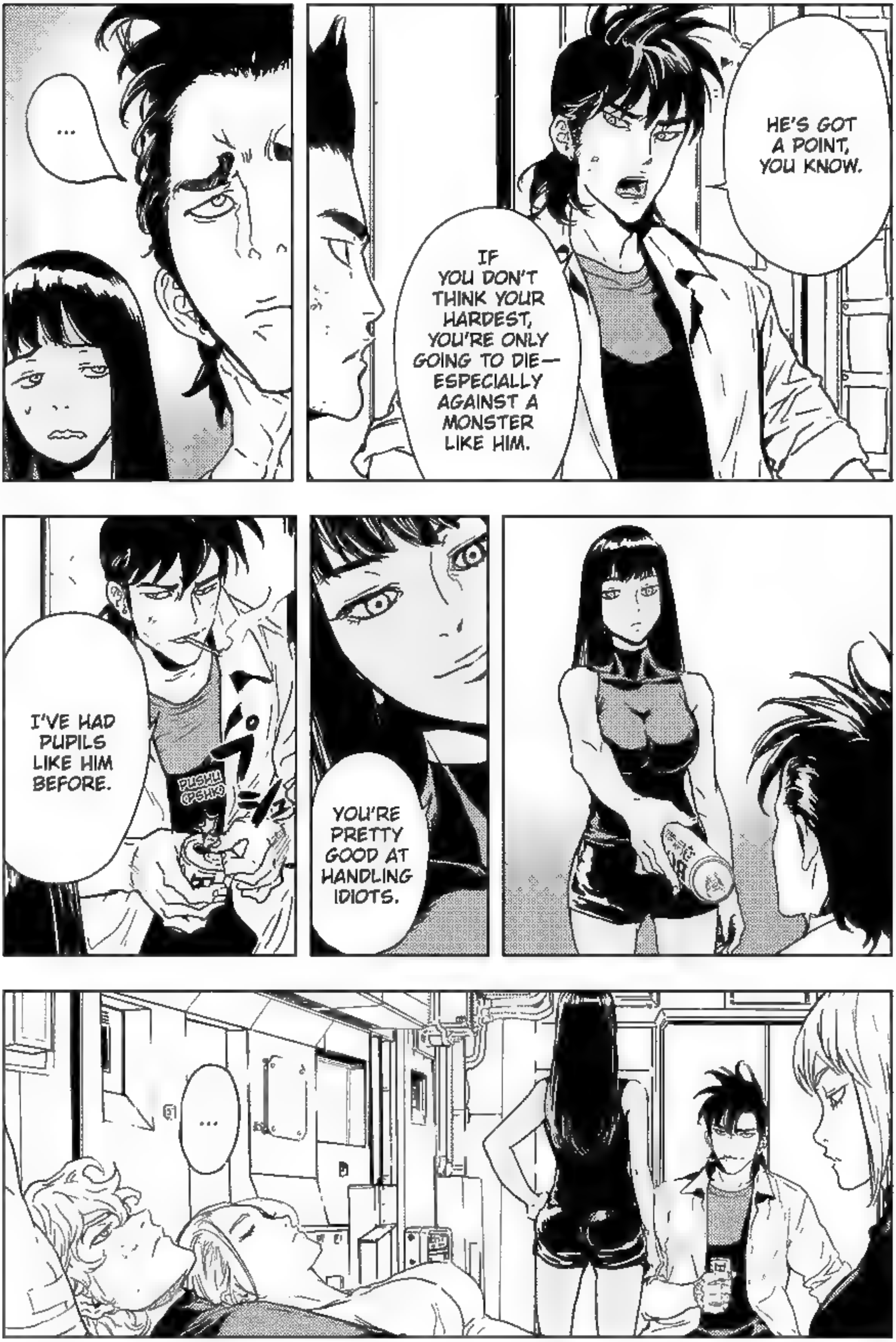
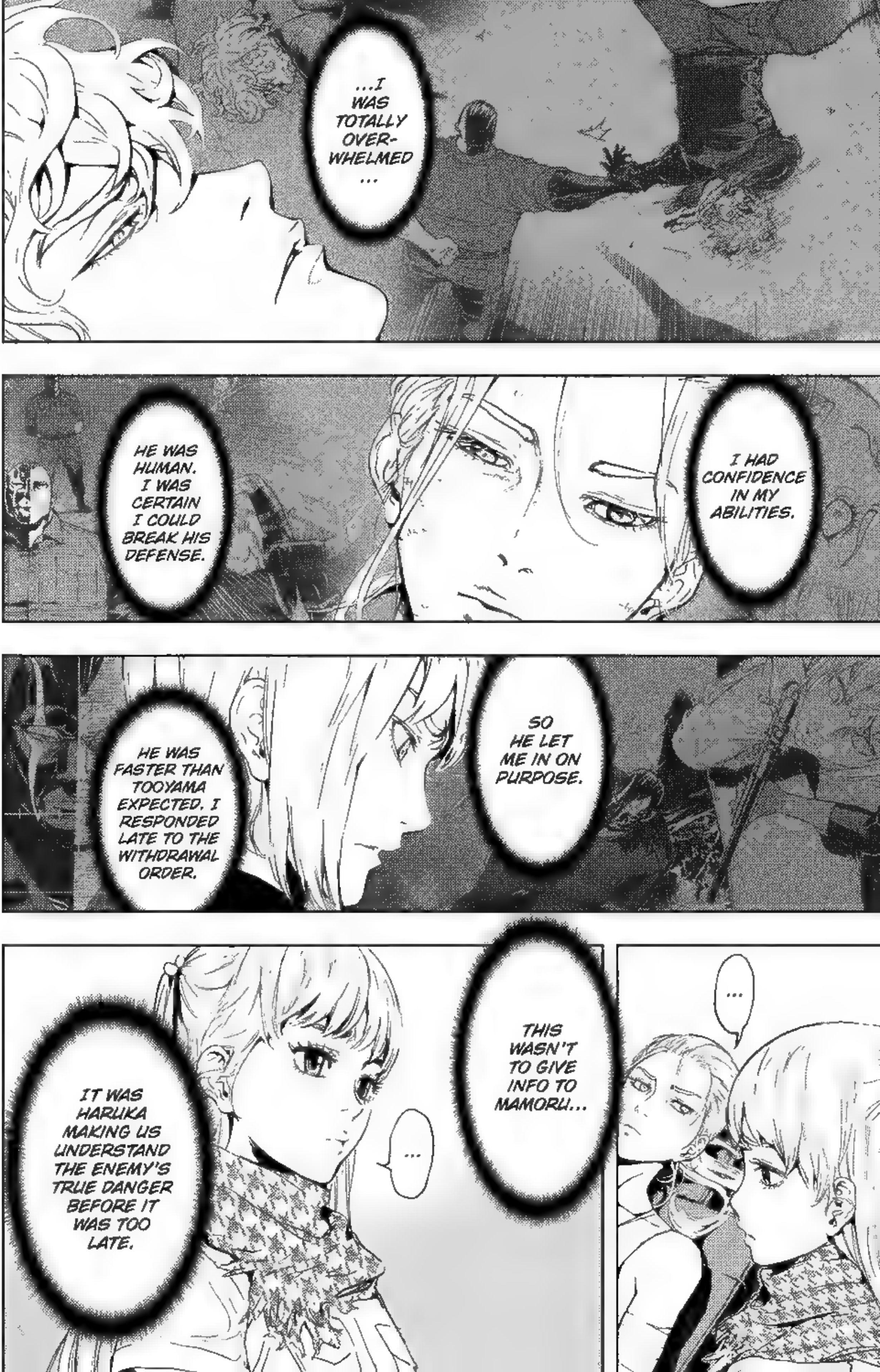


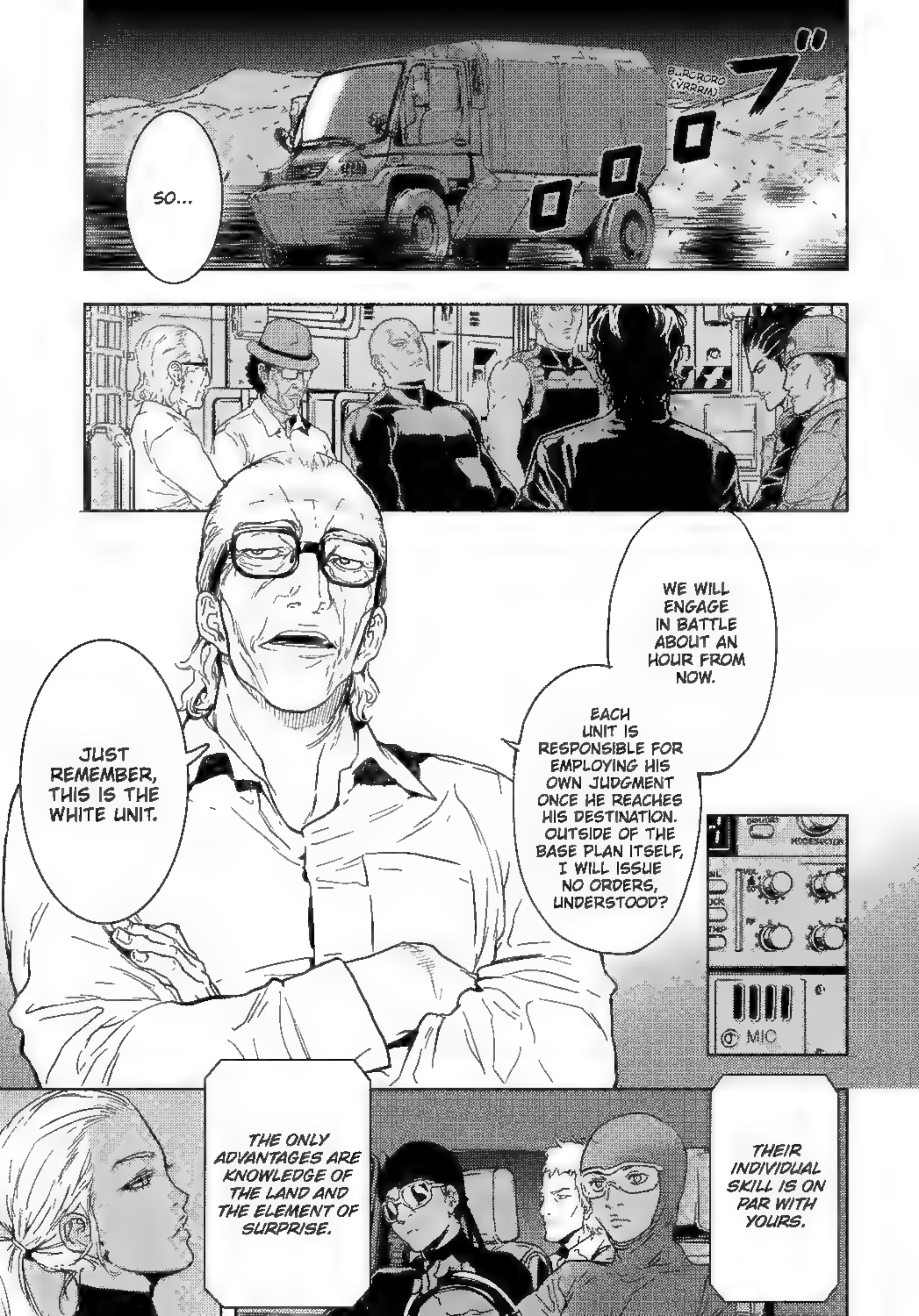

THIS GUY SAVED THE MISTRESS, SO I KNOW HE'S NOT AN ENEMY. BUT...
OKAY, UH... JUST THINK ABOUT IT...
...IT'S STILL HIM WE'RE TALKIN' ABOUT...
WHAT THE HELL...?
YOU JUST SHOW UP OUT OF NOWHERE AND START CALLING THE SHOTS? WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE!?
シュパ
SHUPA (SHWIP)

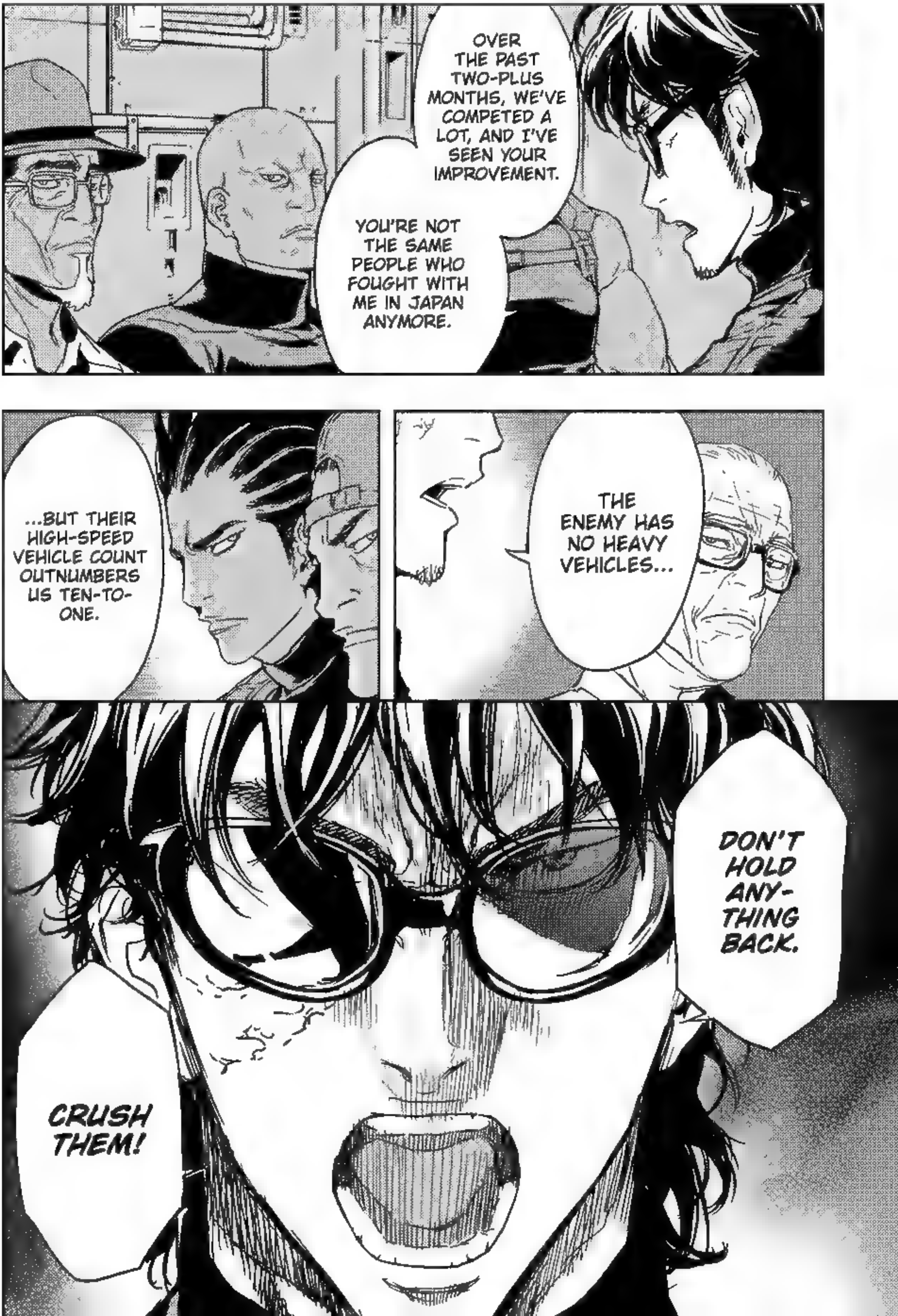

JUST AN ASSASSIN...
AND HARUKA TOOYAMA'S OLD HOMEROOM TEACHER.
WHA—!?
TEACHER? YOU MEAN... YOU'RE... JESUS?
??
He is Jesus.
One of the world's most elite killers. The number of executions he's carried out...
SPARC speaking
...is easily the highest of any individual tracked within the Element Network's files.
THANKS FOR THE INTRODUCTION, COMPUTER.
SPARC speaking
You may call me SPARC, if it pleases you.

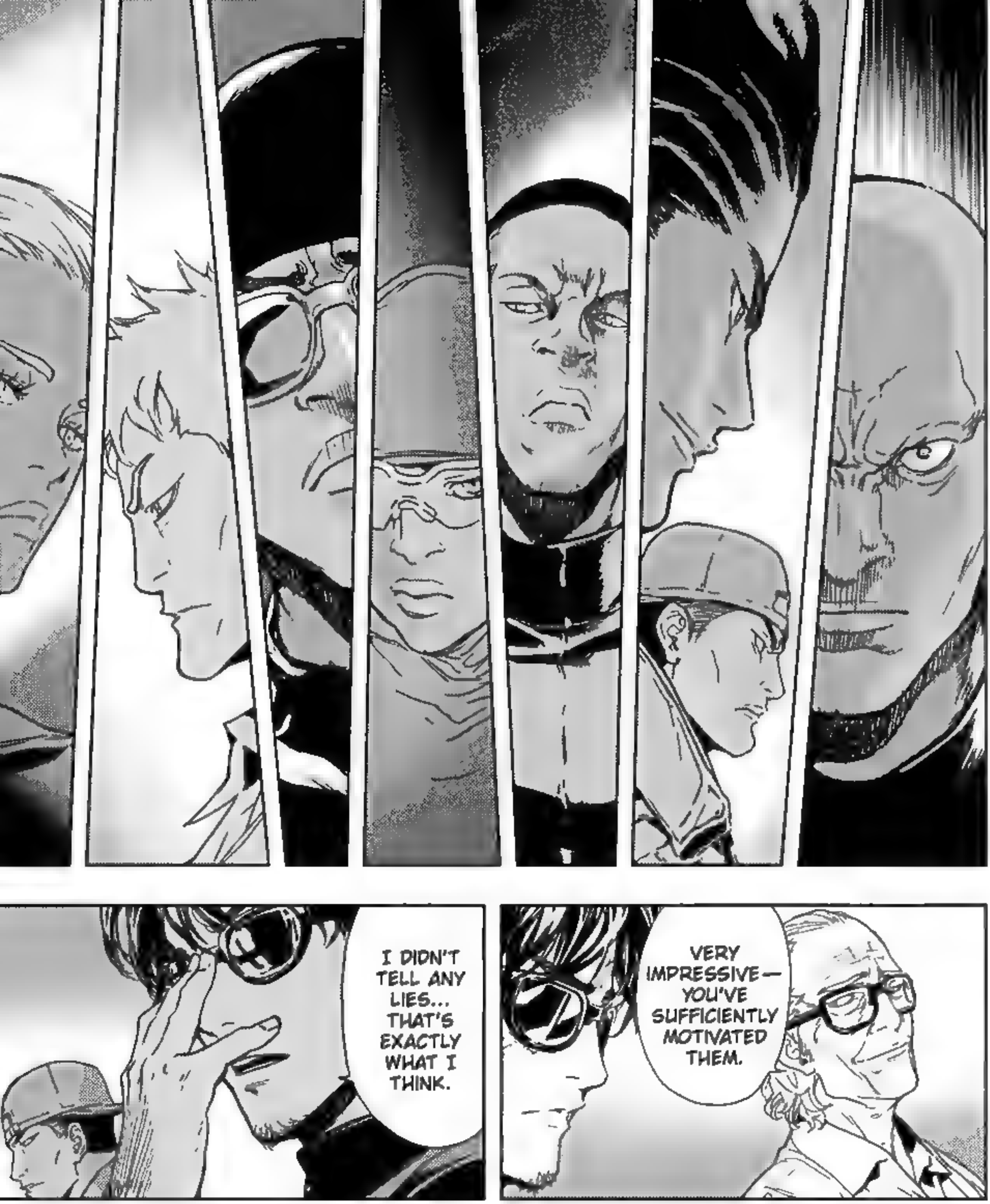

RIGHT, THAT'S WHAT DAIBA CALLED YOU.
KINDA TICKS ME OFF HEARING HIS VOICE LIKE THIS.
SPARC speaking
My voice is sampled off of Master's.
If you wish, I can change it to any other voice...
NAH, DON'T BOTHER ...
SO YOU'RE THE BEST IN THE WORLD!
BIG FUCKIN' DEAL, MAN!!
ISN'T THIS WHY ZASHID SAID YOU HAD "KARMA FOR BEING STUPID"?
SH-SHUT UP!
I SEE. YOU HAVE KARMA FOR BEING STUPID.
BUT I'VE GOT A SOFT SPOT FOR STUPID PEOPLE.
NO GENIUS CAN BRING ABOUT A MIRACLE, AFTER ALL.
HOWEVER ...

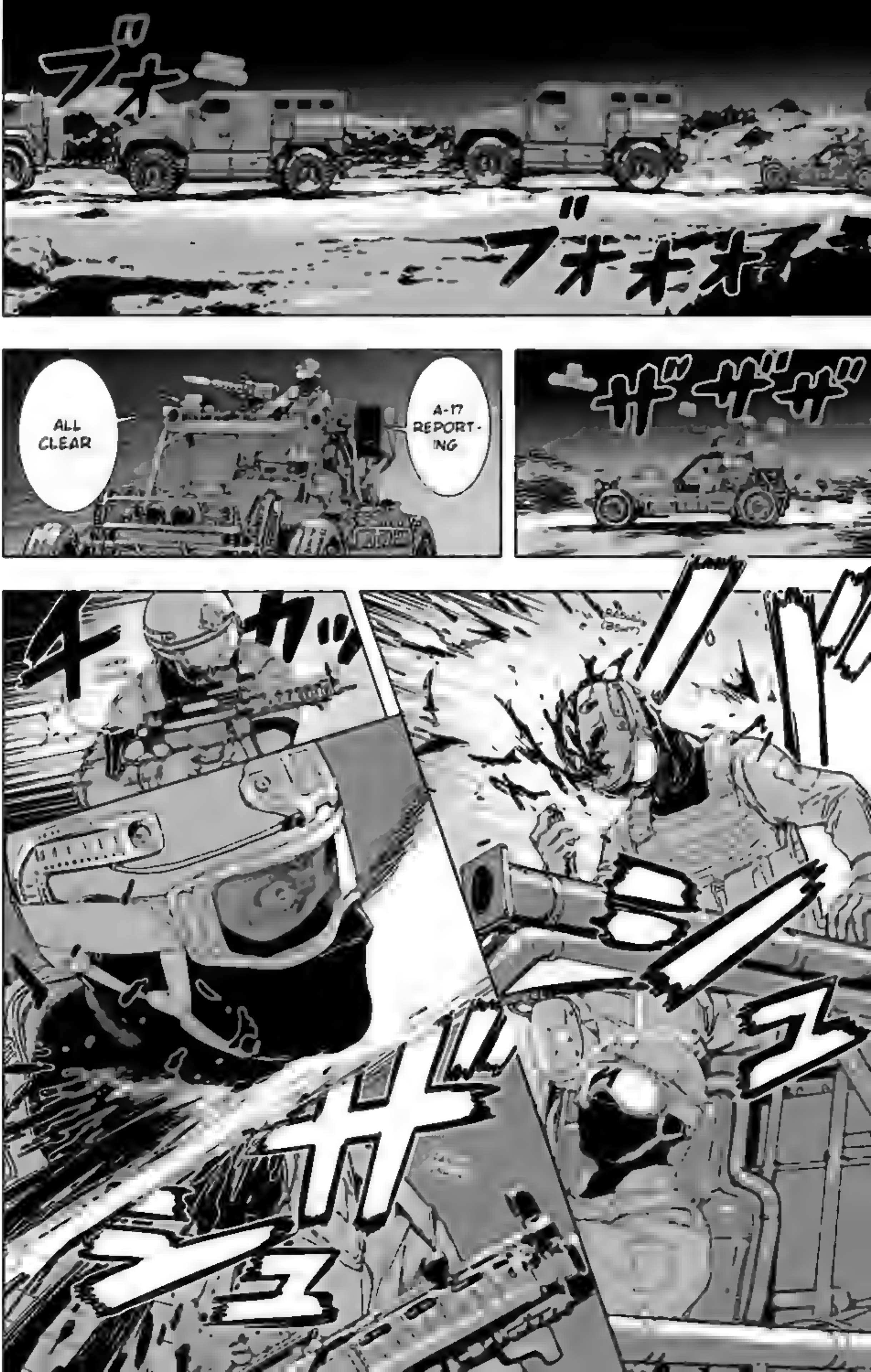

HE'S GOT A POINT, YOU KNOW.
IF YOU DON'T THINK YOUR HARDEST, YOU'RE ONLY GOING TO DIE—ESPECIALLY AGAINST A MONSTER LIKE HIM.
...
YOU'RE PRETTY GOOD AT HANDLING IDIOTS.
I'VE HAD PUPILS LIKE HIM BEFORE.
PUSHU (PSHK)
...

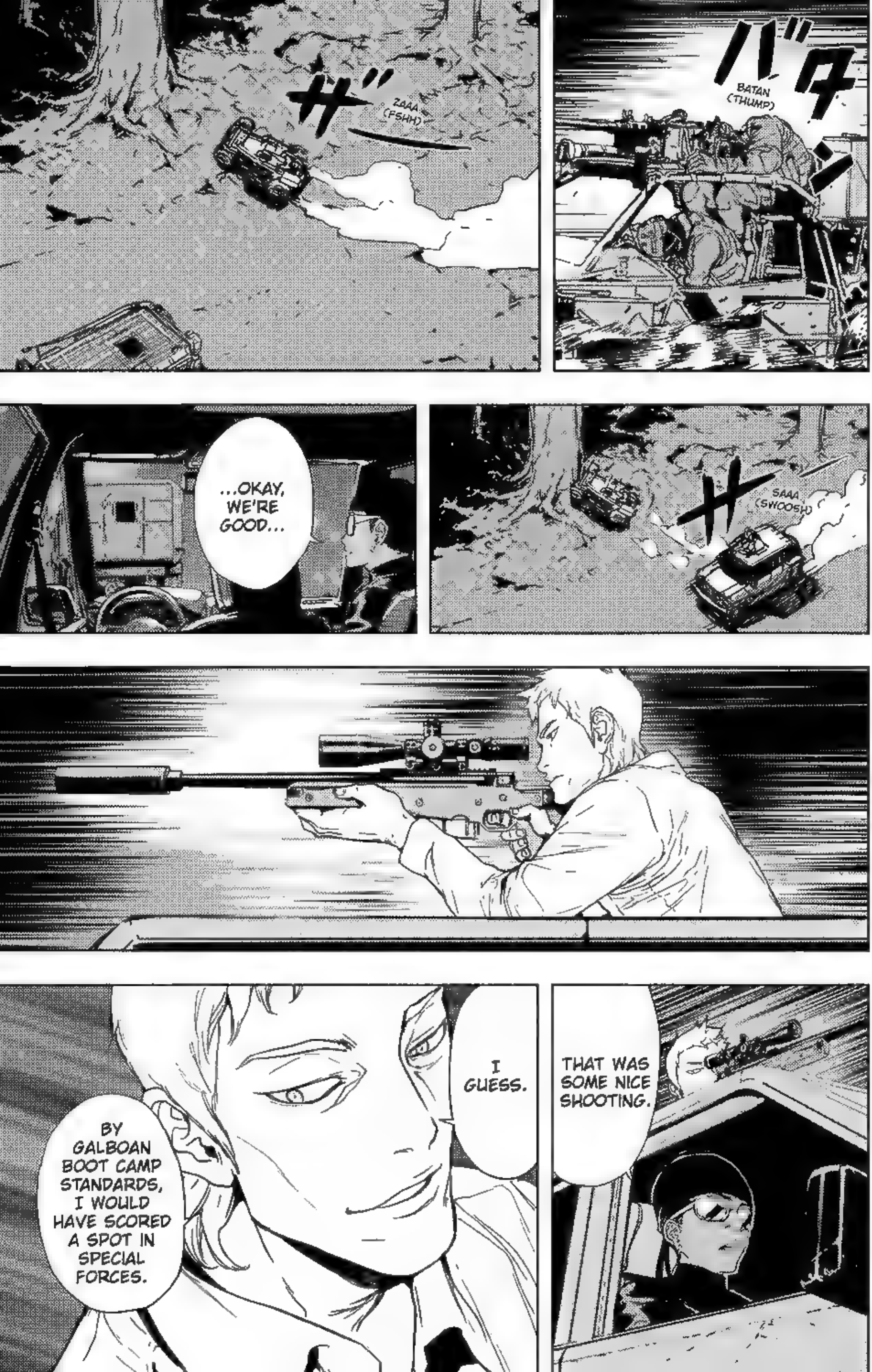

…I WAS TOTALLY OVERWHELMED…
I HAD CONFIDENCE IN MY ABILITIES.
HE WAS HUMAN. I WAS CERTAIN I COULD BREAK HIS DEFENSE.
SO HE LET ME IN ON PURPOSE.
HE WAS FASTER THAN TOOYAMA EXPECTED. I RESPONDED LATE TO THE WITHDRAWAL ORDER.
…
THIS WASN'T TO GIVE INFO TO MAMORU…
…
IT WAS HARUKA MAKING US UNDERSTAND THE ENEMY'S TRUE DANGER BEFORE IT WAS TOO LATE.

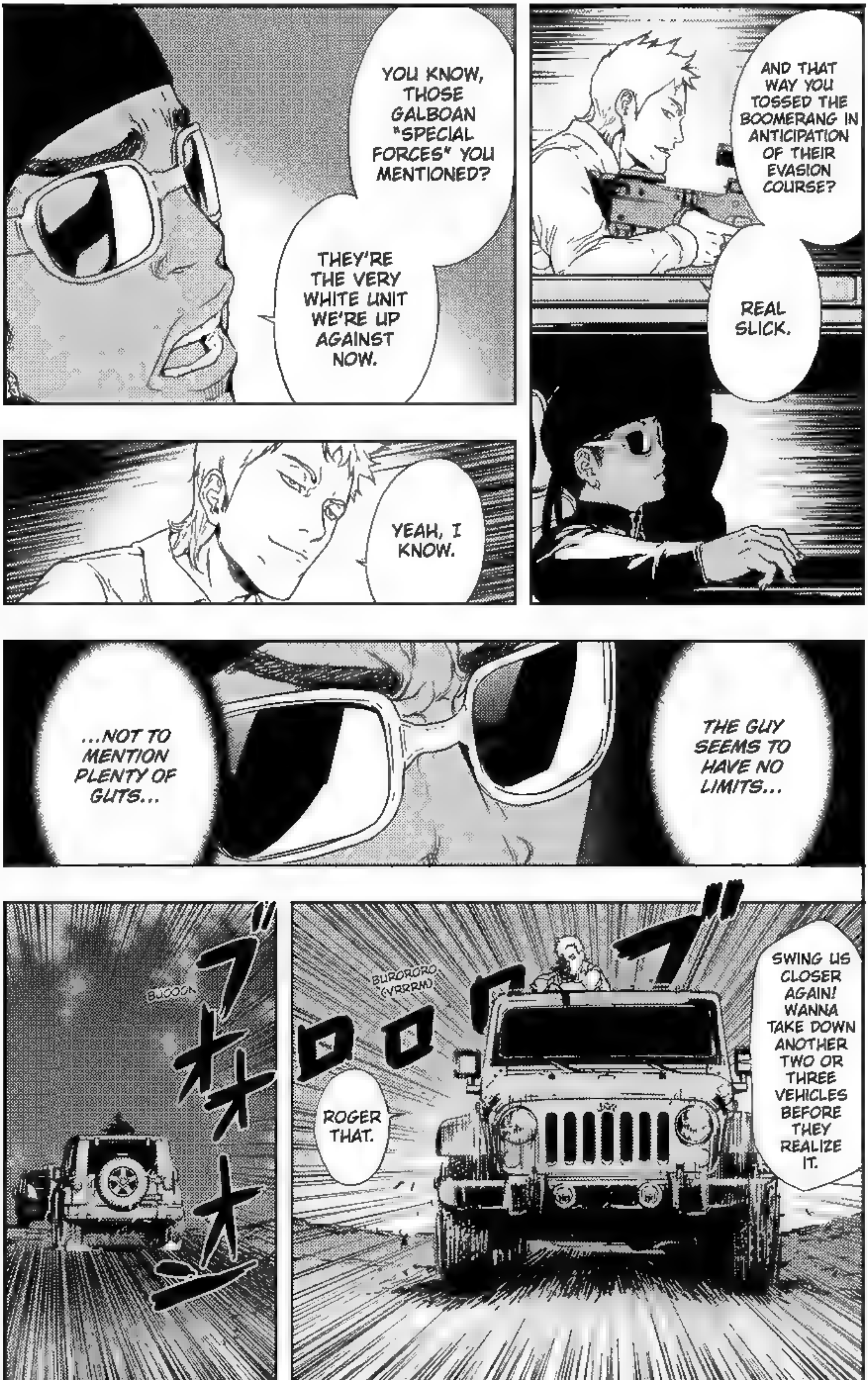

BURORORO (VRRRM)
SO...
WE WILL ENGAGE IN BATTLE ABOUT AN HOUR FROM NOW.
EACH UNIT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR EMPLOYING HIS OWN JUDGMENT ONCE HE REACHES HIS DESTINATION. OUTSIDE OF THE BASE PLAN ITSELF, I WILL ISSUE NO ORDERS, UNDERSTOOD?
JUST REMEMBER, THIS IS THE WHITE UNIT.
MIC
THEIR INDIVIDUAL SKILL IS ON PAR WITH YOURS.
THE ONLY ADVANTAGES ARE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LAND AND THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE.

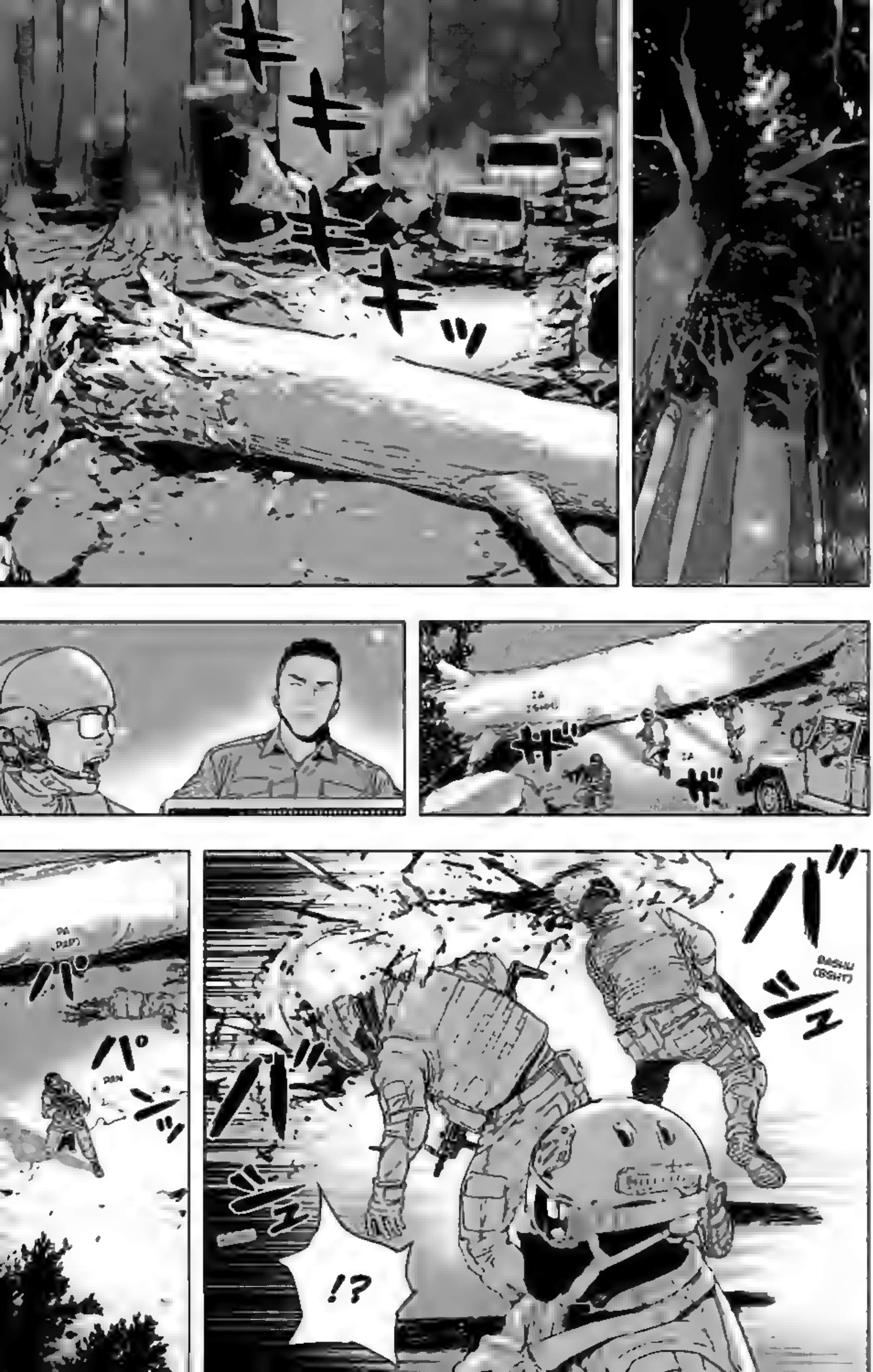

OVER THE PAST TWO-PLUS MONTHS, WE'VE COMPETED A LOT, AND I'VE SEEN YOUR IMPROVEMENT.
YOU'RE NOT THE SAME PEOPLE WHO FOUGHT WITH ME IN JAPAN ANYMORE.
THE ENEMY HAS NO HEAVY VEHICLES...
...BUT THEIR HIGH-SPEED VEHICLE COUNT OUTNUMBERS US TEN-TO-ONE.
DON'T HOLD ANYTHING BACK.
CRUSH THEM!

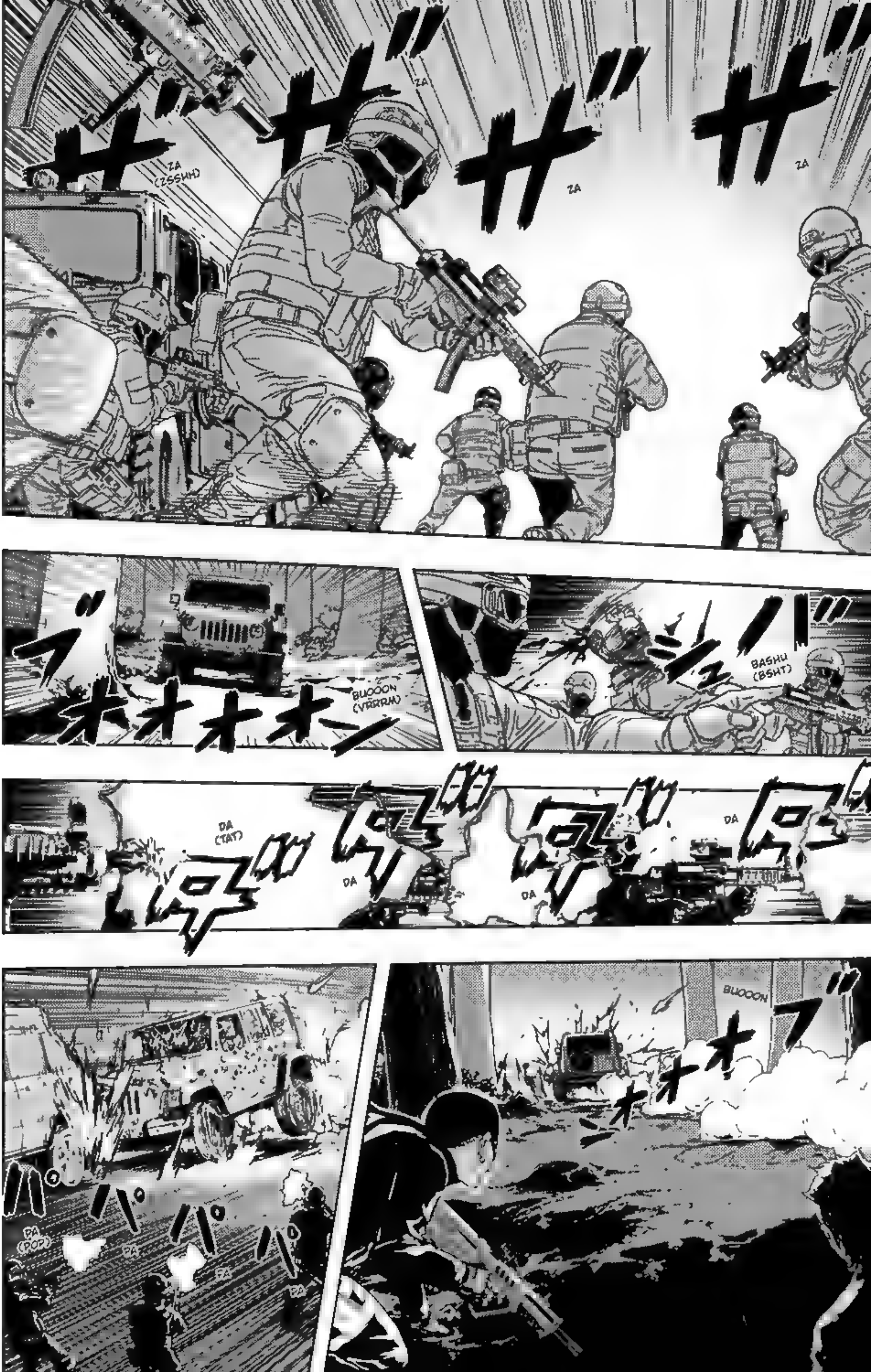

VERY IMPRESSIVE—YOU'VE SUFFICIENTLY MOTIVATED THEM.
I DIDN'T TELL ANY LIES... THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I THINK.
...HMPH.

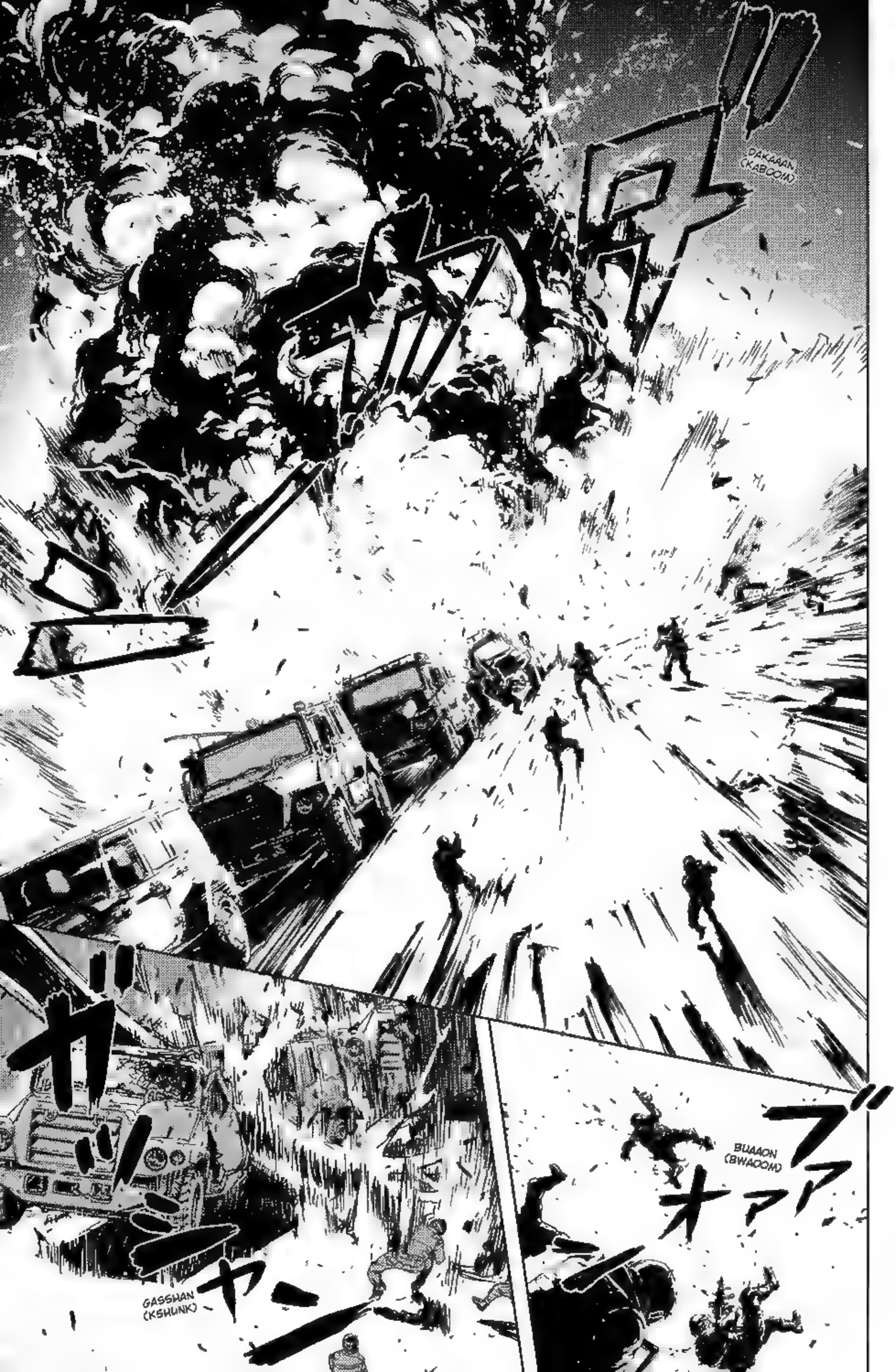

ブォー
ブォオオオー
ザザザ
A-17 REPORTING
ALL CLEAR
ドシュ

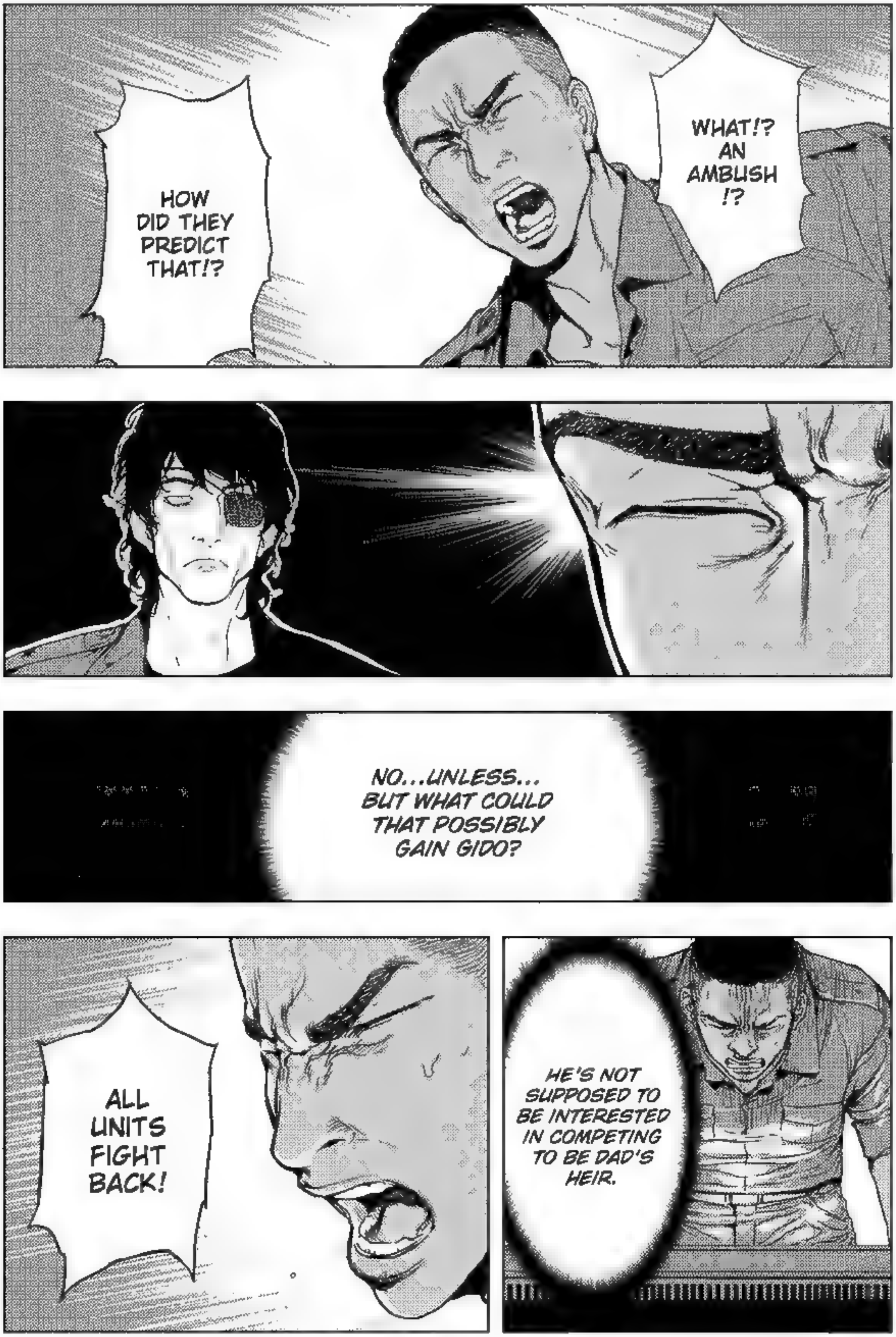

バタン
BATAN (THUMP)
ザ
ZAAA (FSHH)
サ
SAAA (SWOOSH)
...OKAY, WE'RE GOOD...
THAT WAS SOME NICE SHOOTING.
I GUESS.
BY GALBOAN BOOT CAMP STANDARDS, I WOULD HAVE SCORED A SPOT IN SPECIAL FORCES.

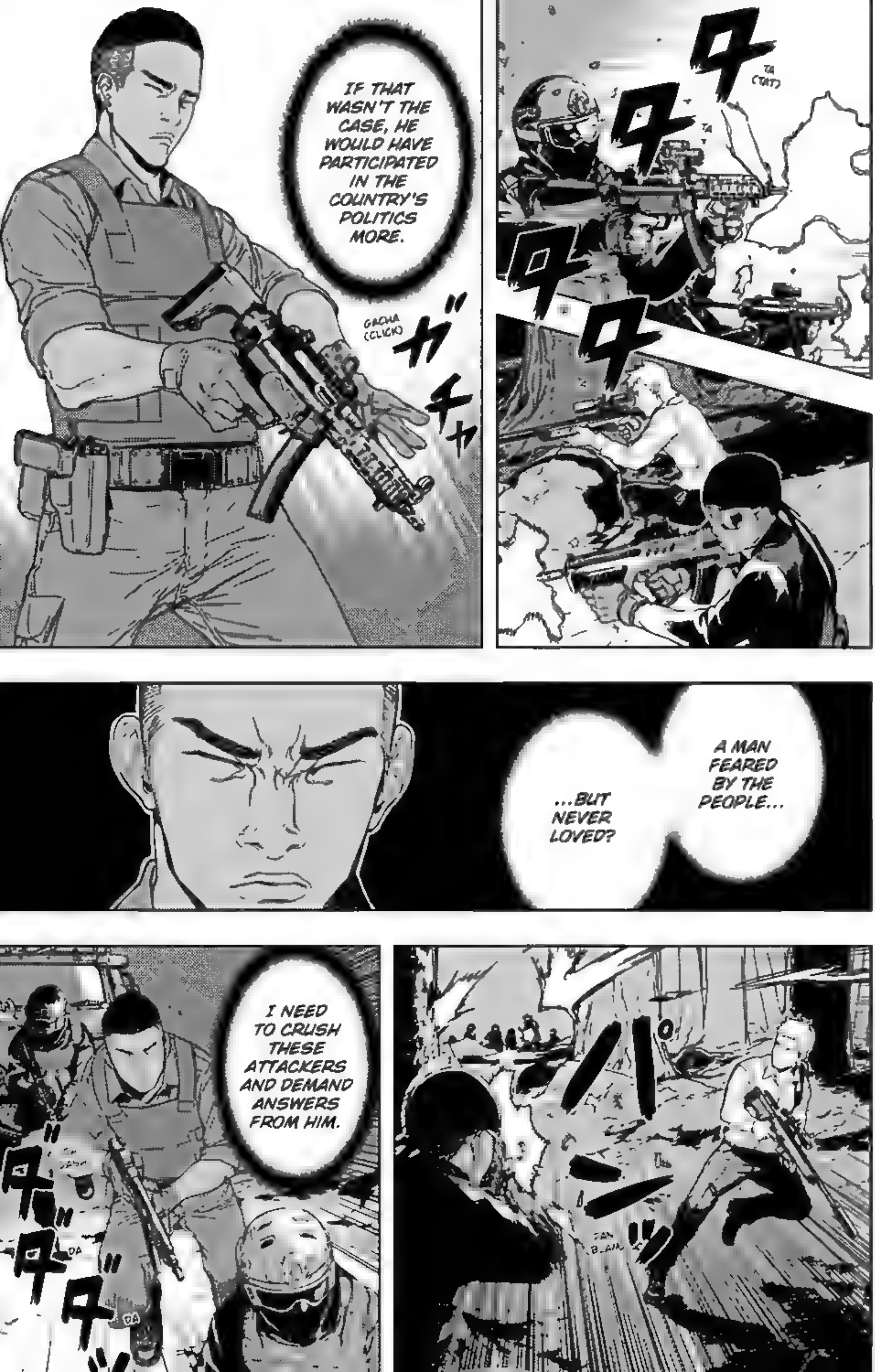

AND THAT WAY YOU TOSSED THE BOOMERANG IN ANTICIPATION OF THEIR EVASION COURSE?
REAL SLICK.
YOU KNOW, THOSE GALBOAN "SPECIAL FORCES" YOU MENTIONED?
THEY'RE THE VERY WHITE UNIT WE'RE UP AGAINST NOW.
YEAH, I KNOW.
THE GUY SEEMS TO HAVE NO LIMITS...
...NOT TO MENTION PLENTY OF GUTS...
ブロロロ
BURORORO (VRRRM)
SWING US CLOSER AGAIN! WANNA TAKE DOWN ANOTHER TWO OR THREE VEHICLES BEFORE THEY REALIZE IT.
ROGER THAT.
ブオオオ
BUOOOH

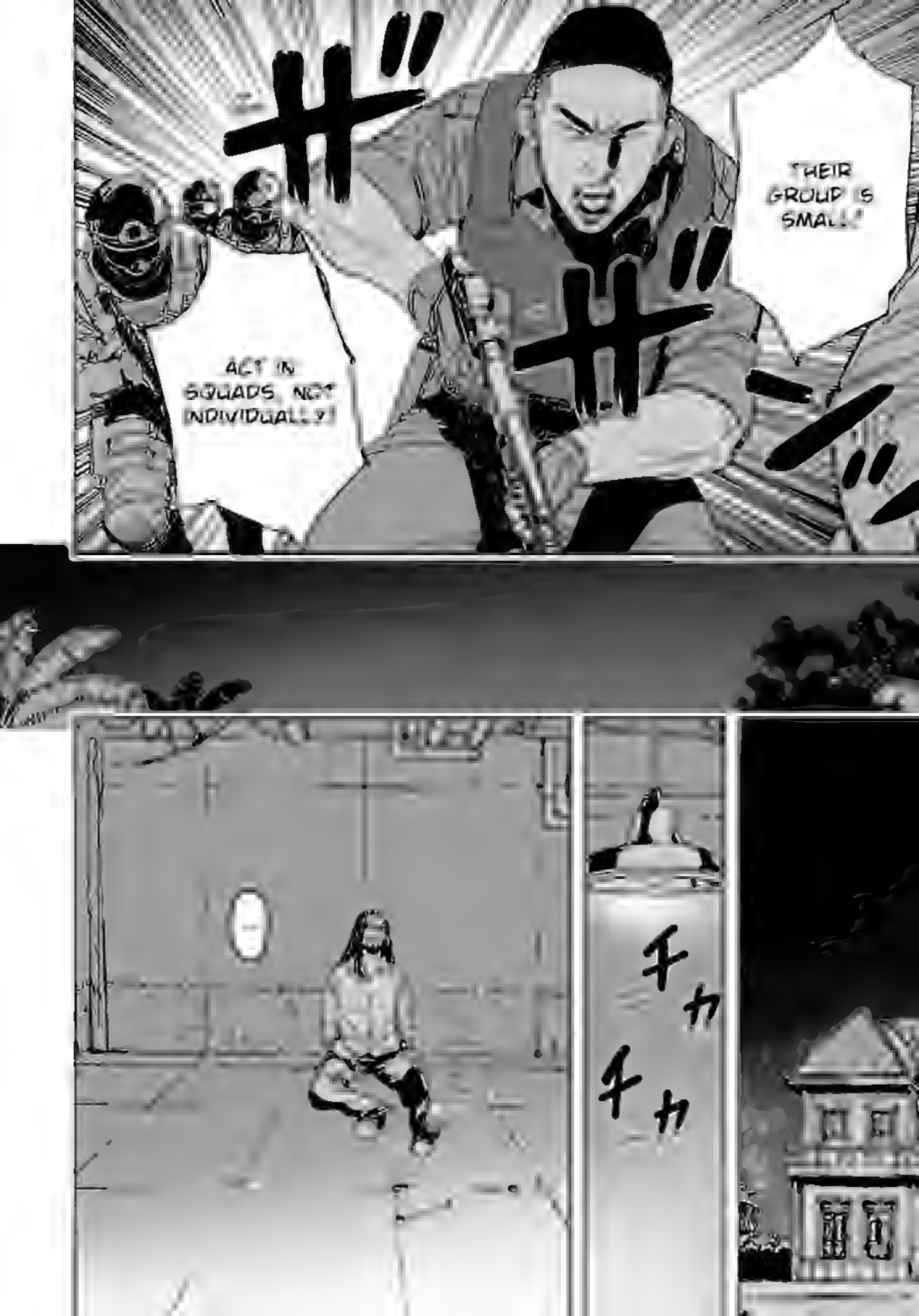

キキキキッ
ZA
ZSHH
ザザ
BASHU
(BSHT)
バシュ
バシュ
!?
PA
(PAP)
パパ
PAN
パンッ

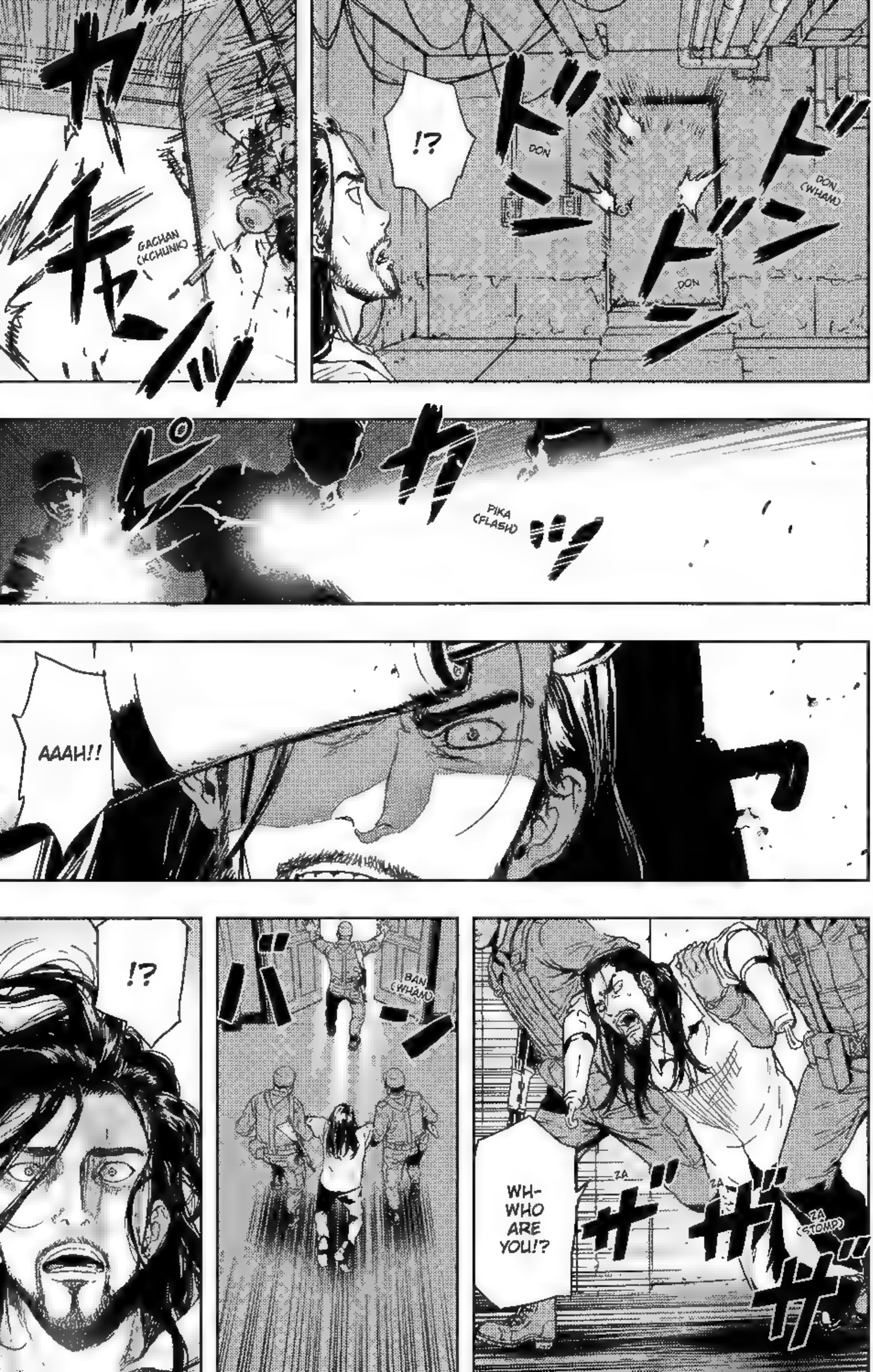

ザ
ZA
ザ
ZA
ザ
ZA
ザ
ZA (ZSSHH)
バシュ
BASHU (BSHT)
ブオオオオン
BUOOON (VRRRM)
ダッ
DA
ダッ
DA
ダッ
DA
ダッ
DA (TAT)
ブオオオ
BUOOON
パ
PA
パ
PA
パ
PA
パ
PA (POP)

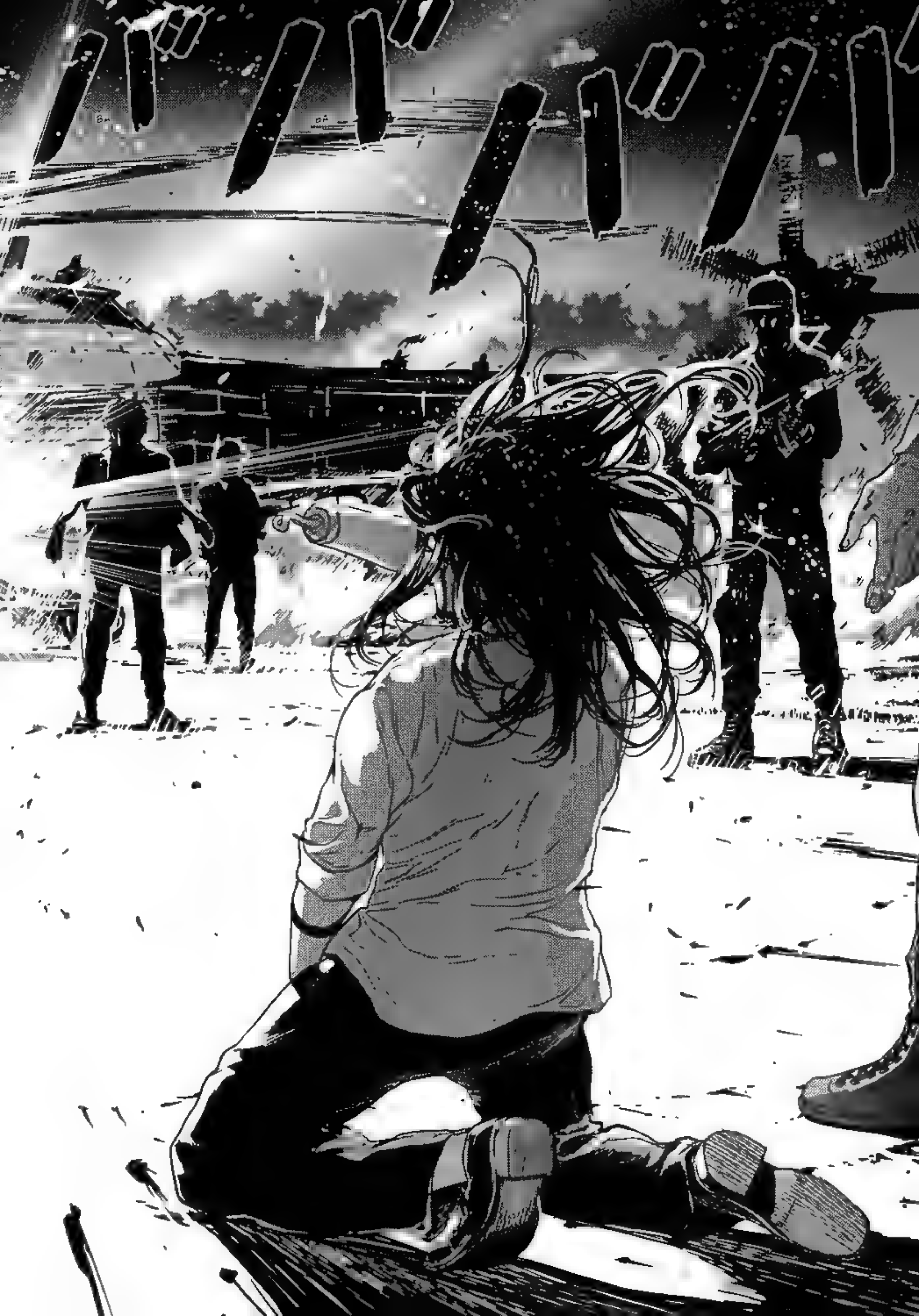

DAKAAAN (KABOOM)
BUAAON (BWAOOM)
GASSHAN (KSHUNK)

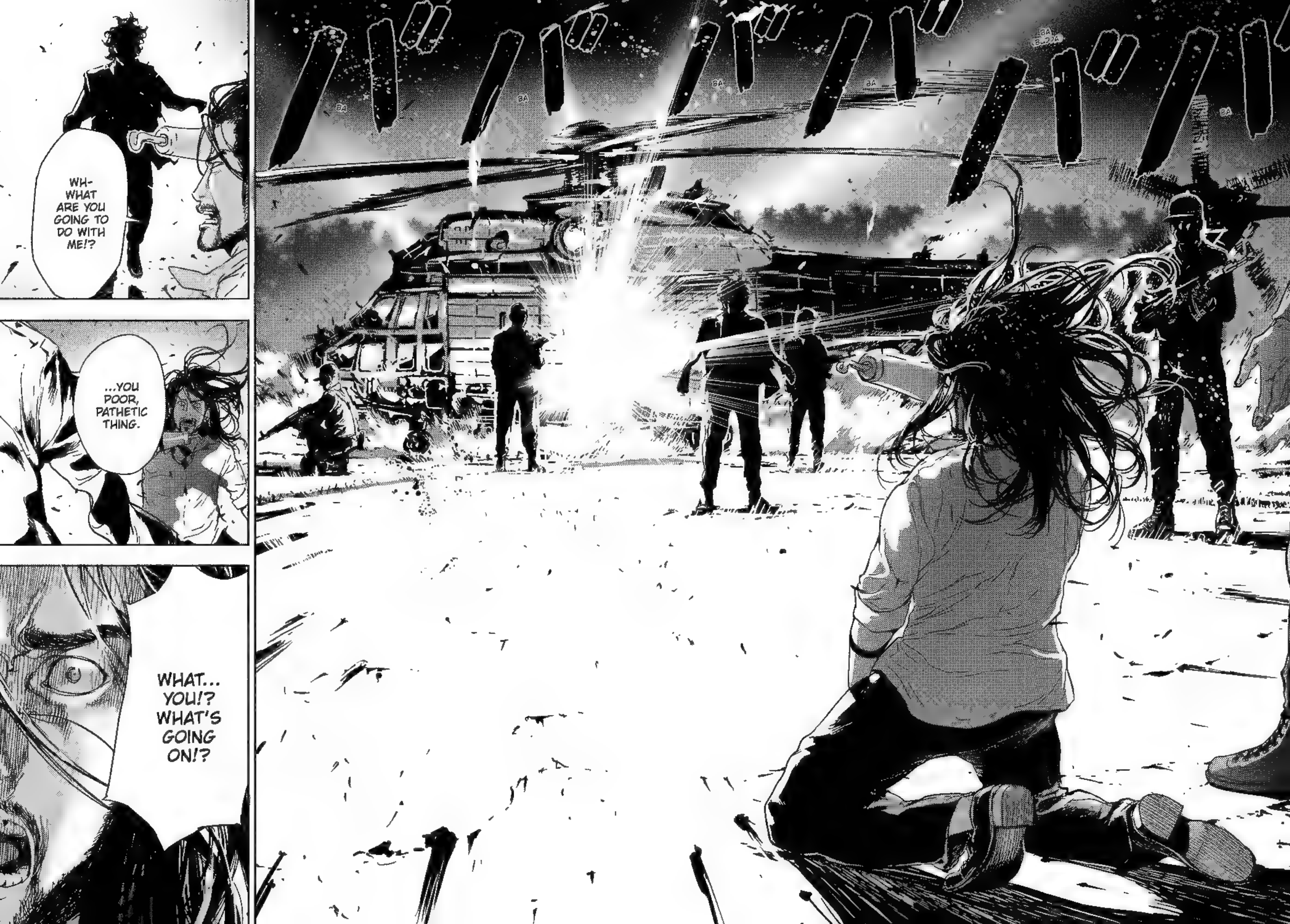

WHAT!? AN AMBUSH!?
HOW DID THEY PREDICT THAT!?
NO...UNLESS... BUT WHAT COULD THAT POSSIBLY GAIN GIDO?
HE'S NOT SUPPOSED TO BE INTERESTED IN COMPETING TO BE DAD'S HEIR.
ALL UNITS FIGHT BACK!

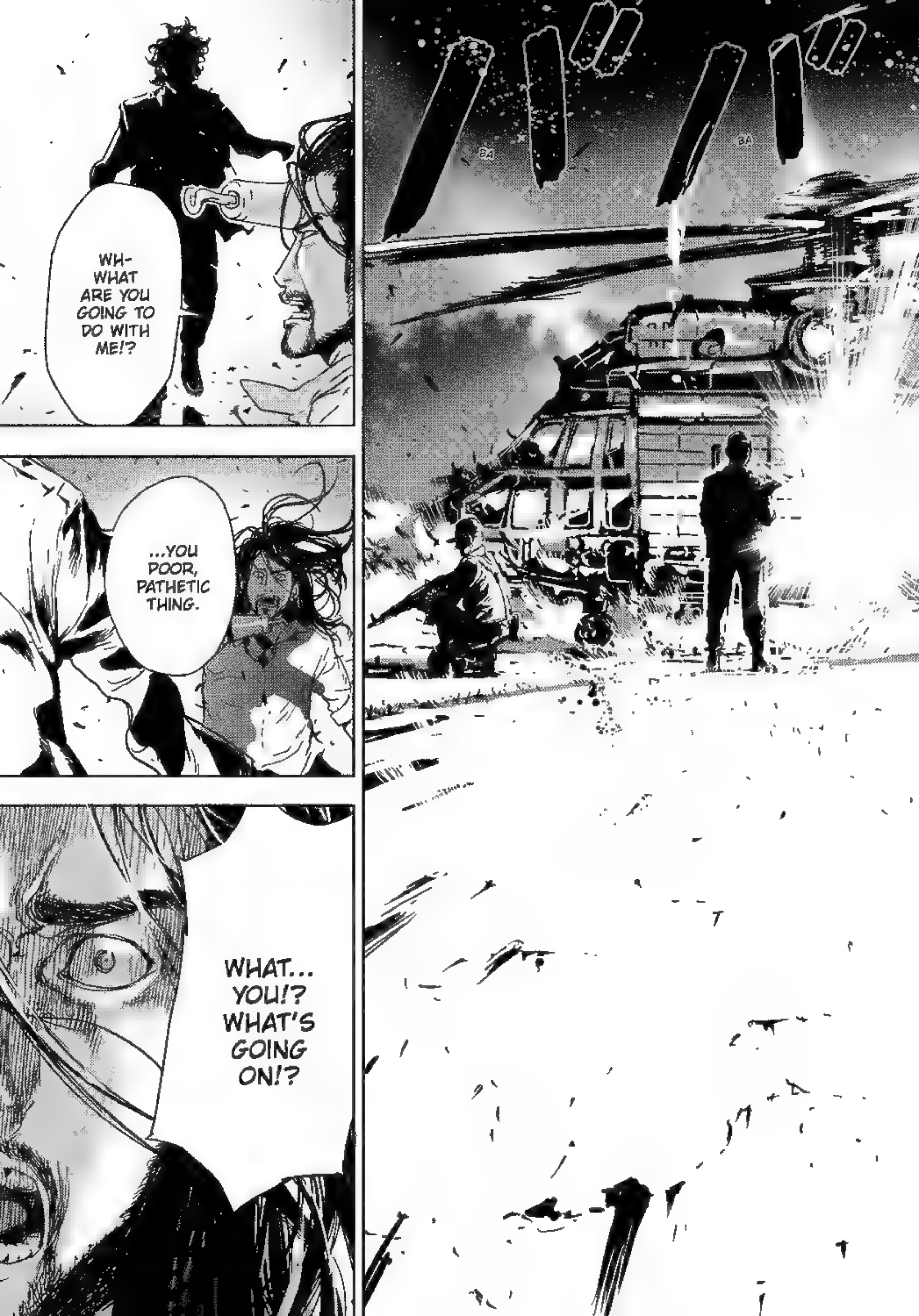

タ
TA (TAT)
タ
TA
タ
タ
IF THAT WASN'T THE CASE, HE WOULD HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THE COUNTRY'S POLITICS MORE.
ガチャ
GACHA (CLICK)
A MAN FEARED BY THE PEOPLE...
...BUT NEVER LOVED?
パン
PAN BLAM
I NEED TO CRUSH THESE ATTACKERS AND DEMAND ANSWERS FROM HIM.
ダ
DA (DASH)
ダ
DA
ダ
DA

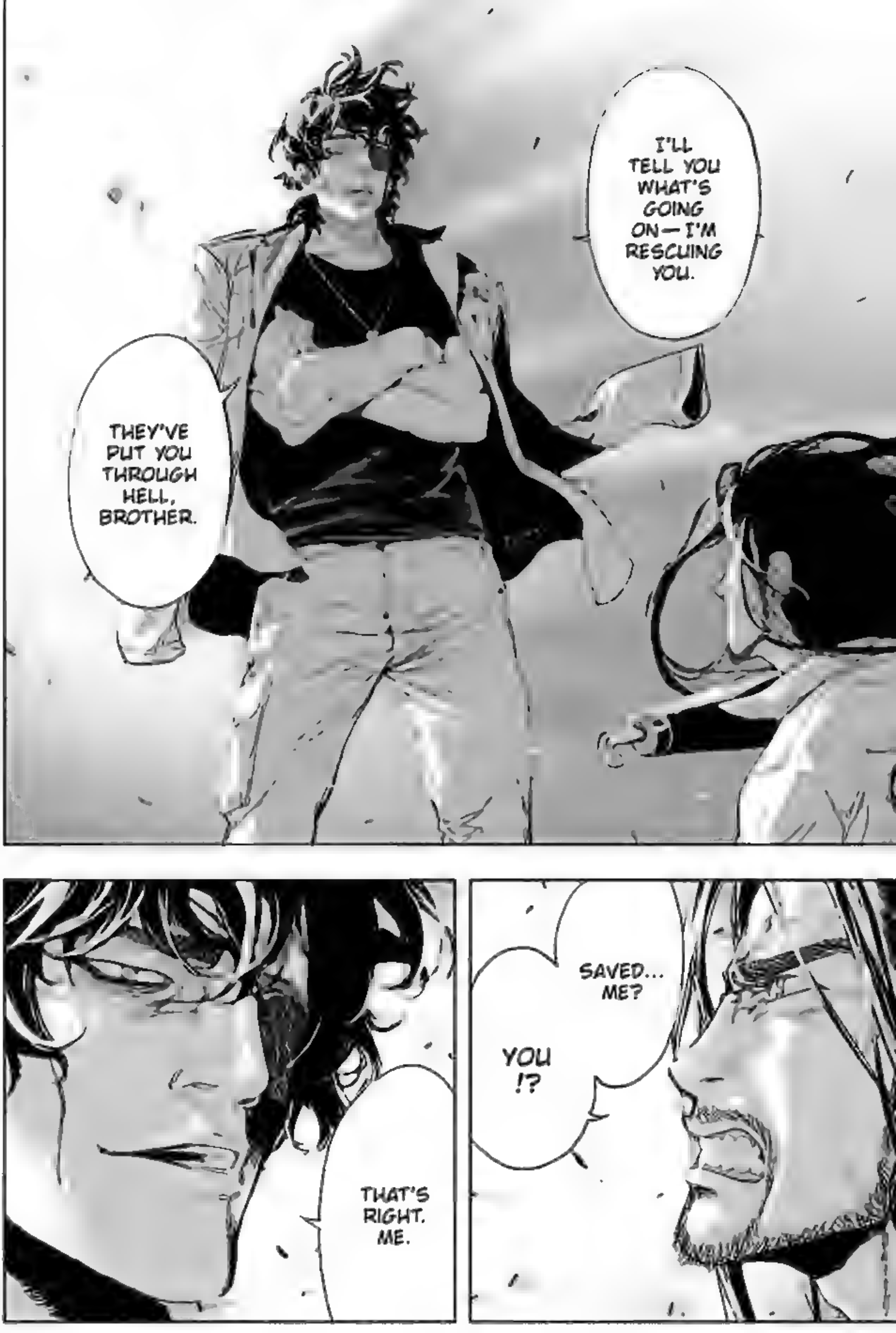

THEIR GROUP IS SMALL!
ザッ
ザッ
ACT IN SQUADS NOT INDIVIDUALLY!
チカ
チカ

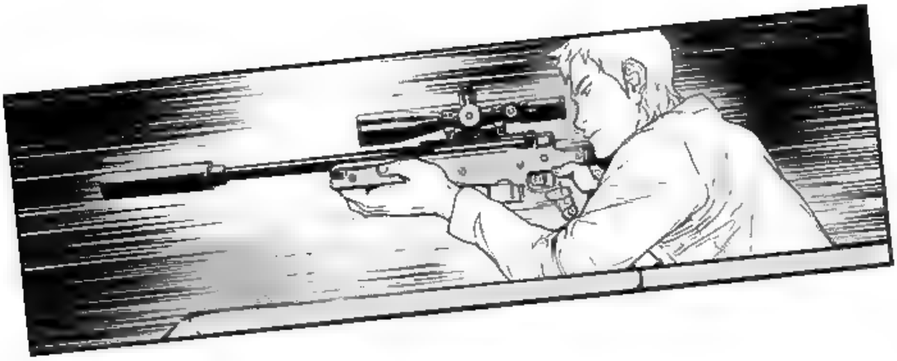

!?
ドン
DON
ドン
DON (WHAM)
ドン
DON
ガチャン
GACHAN (KCHUNK)
ピカッ
PIKA (FLASH)
AAAH!!
WH- WHO ARE YOU!?
ザッ
ZA
ザッ
ZA
ザッ
ZA (STOMP)
バーン
BAN (WHAM)
!?


ババババ

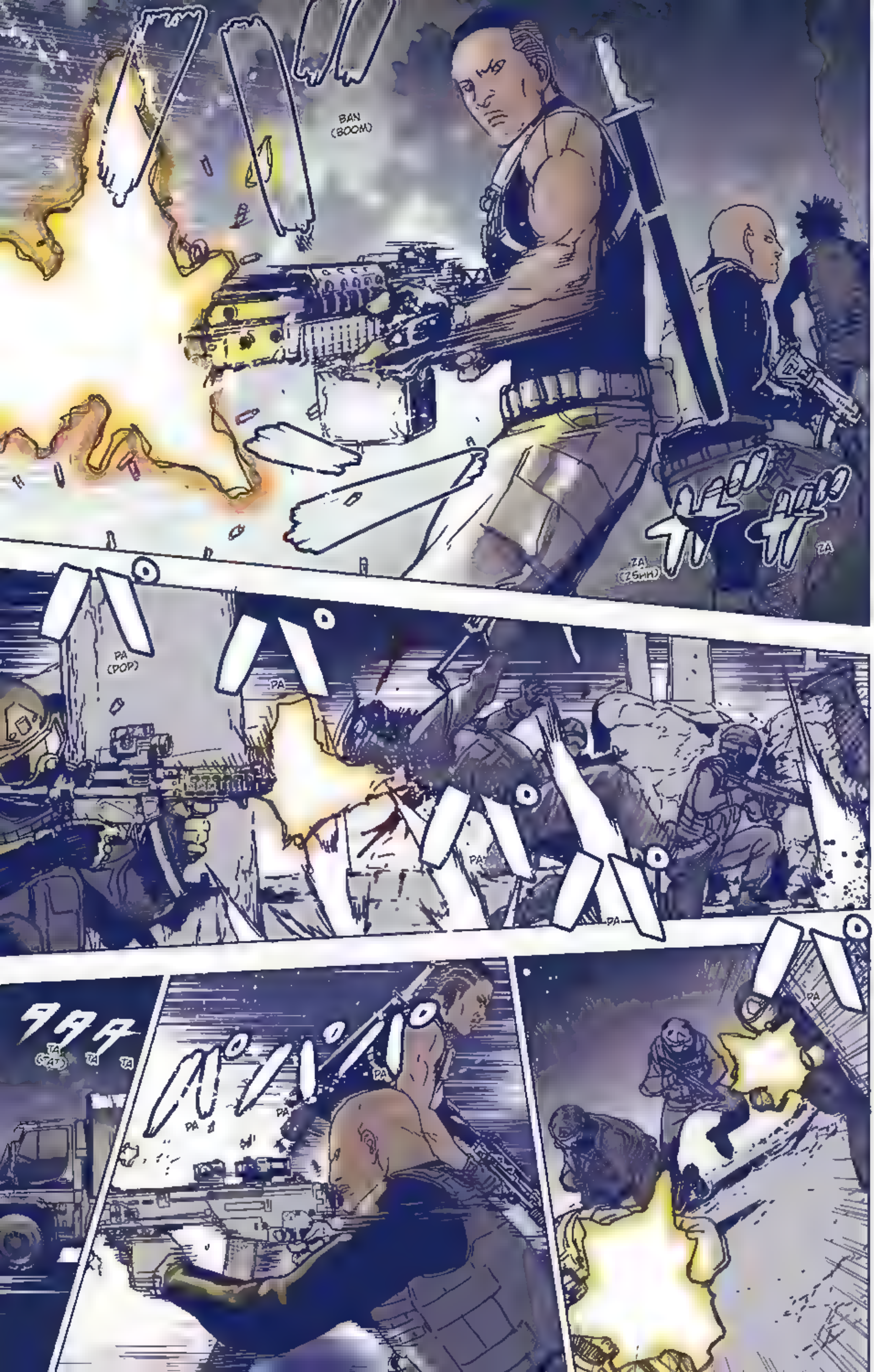

BA BUDDA
BA
BA
BA
BA
BA
WH- WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH ME!?
...YOU POOR, PATHETIC THING.
WHAT... YOU!? WHAT'S GOING ON!?


BA
BA
WH- WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH ME!?
...YOU POOR, PATHETIC THING.
WHAT... YOU!? WHAT'S GOING ON!?


I'LL TELL YOU WHAT'S GOING ON—I'M RESCUING YOU.
THEY'VE PUT YOU THROUGH HELL, BROTHER.
SAVED... ME?
YOU!?
THAT'S RIGHT. ME.



Until Death do us Part


ZA (ZSHH)
ZA
BAN (BOOM)
パ
PA (POP)
パ
PA
パ
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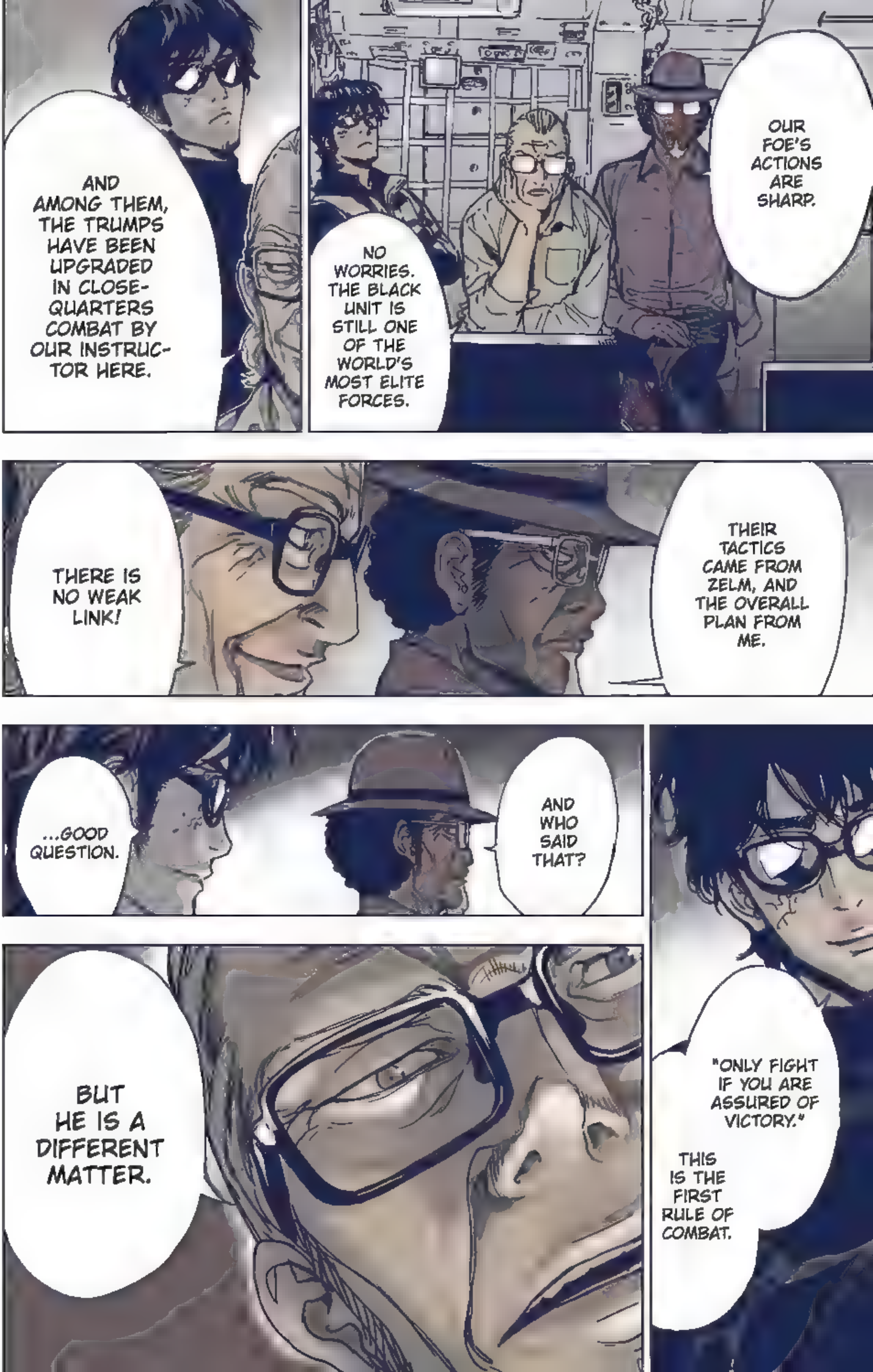
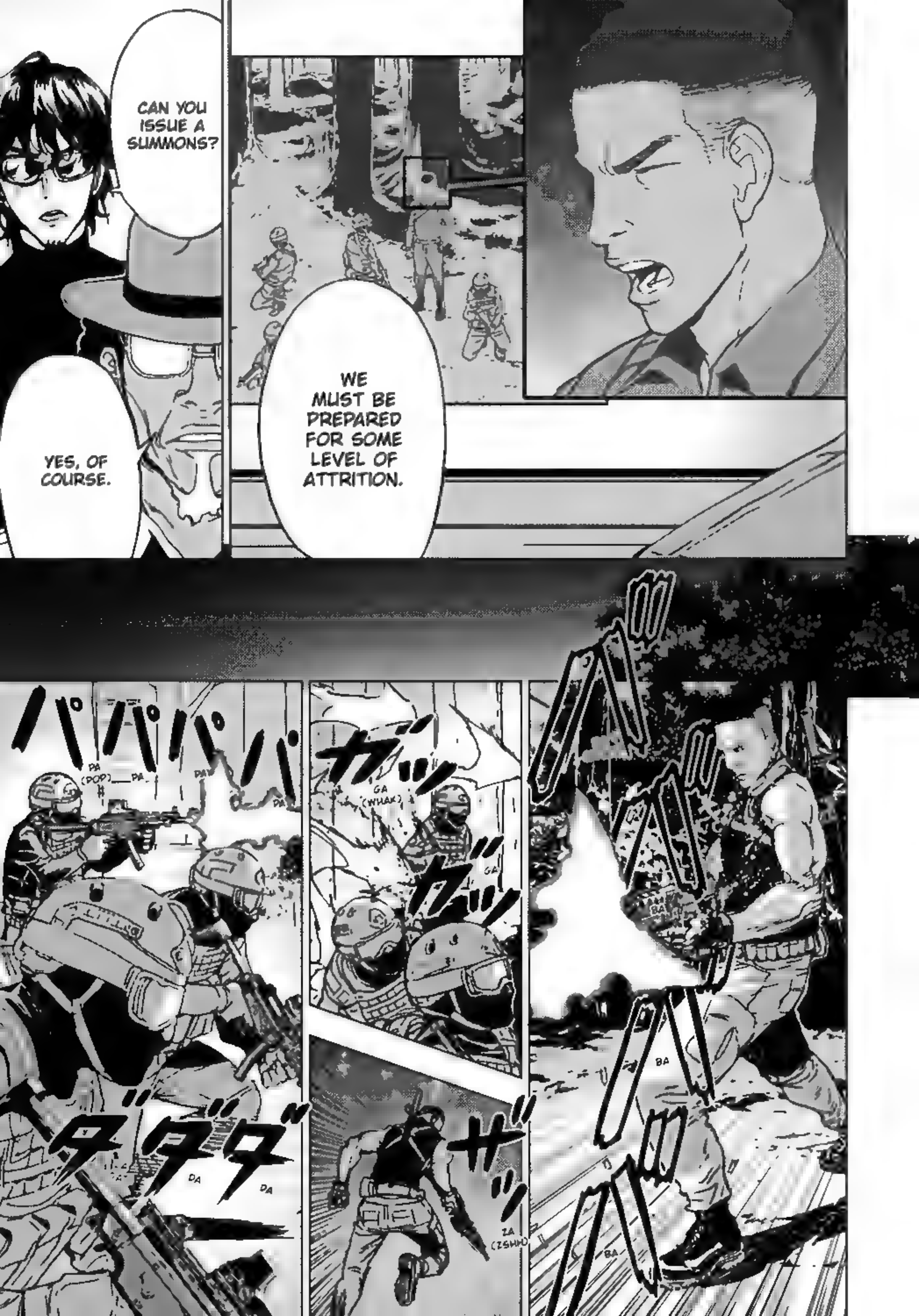
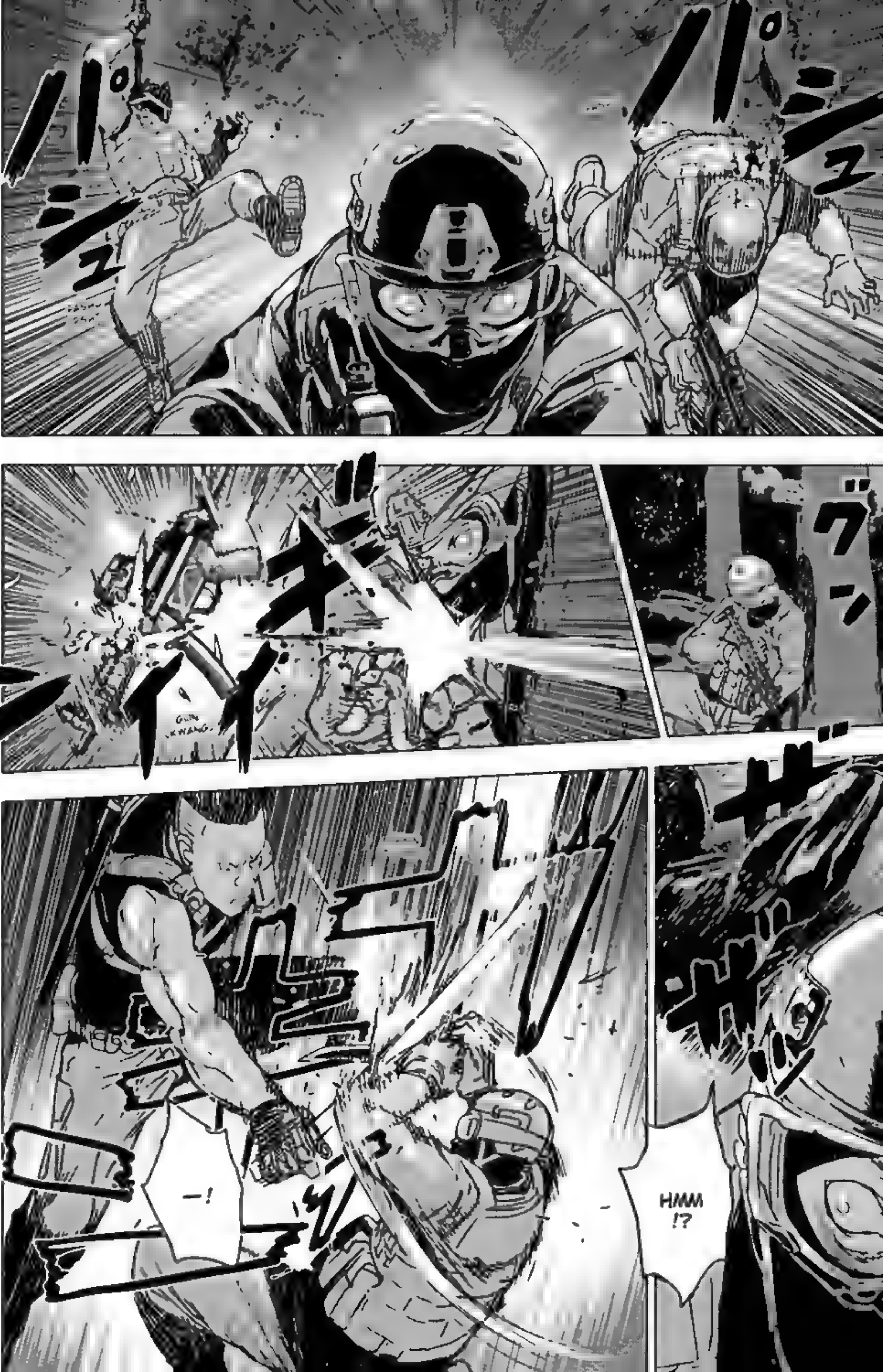
パ
PA
パ
PA
パパパ
PA
PA
PA
タタタ
TA (TAT)
TA
TA

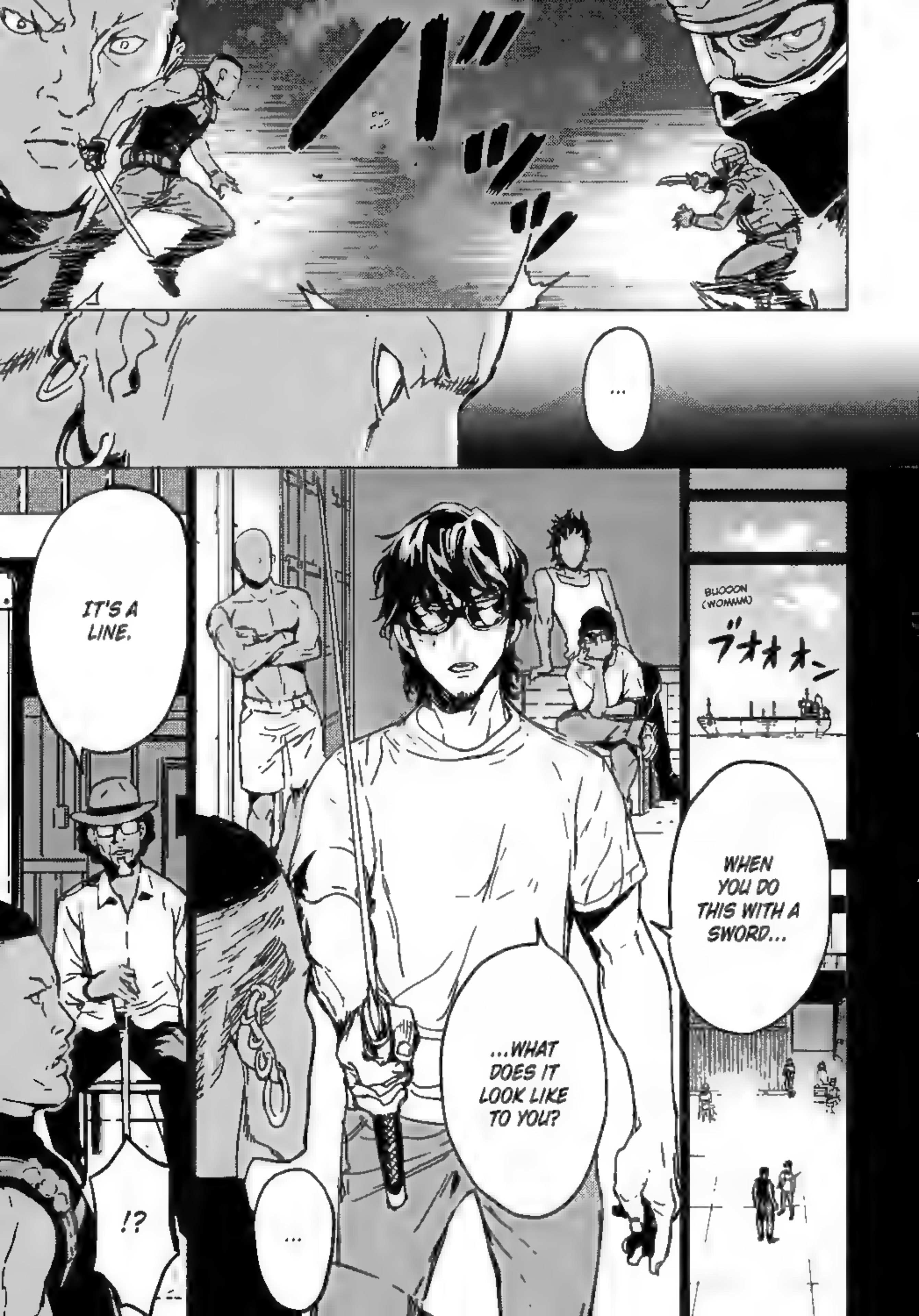
chapter 198

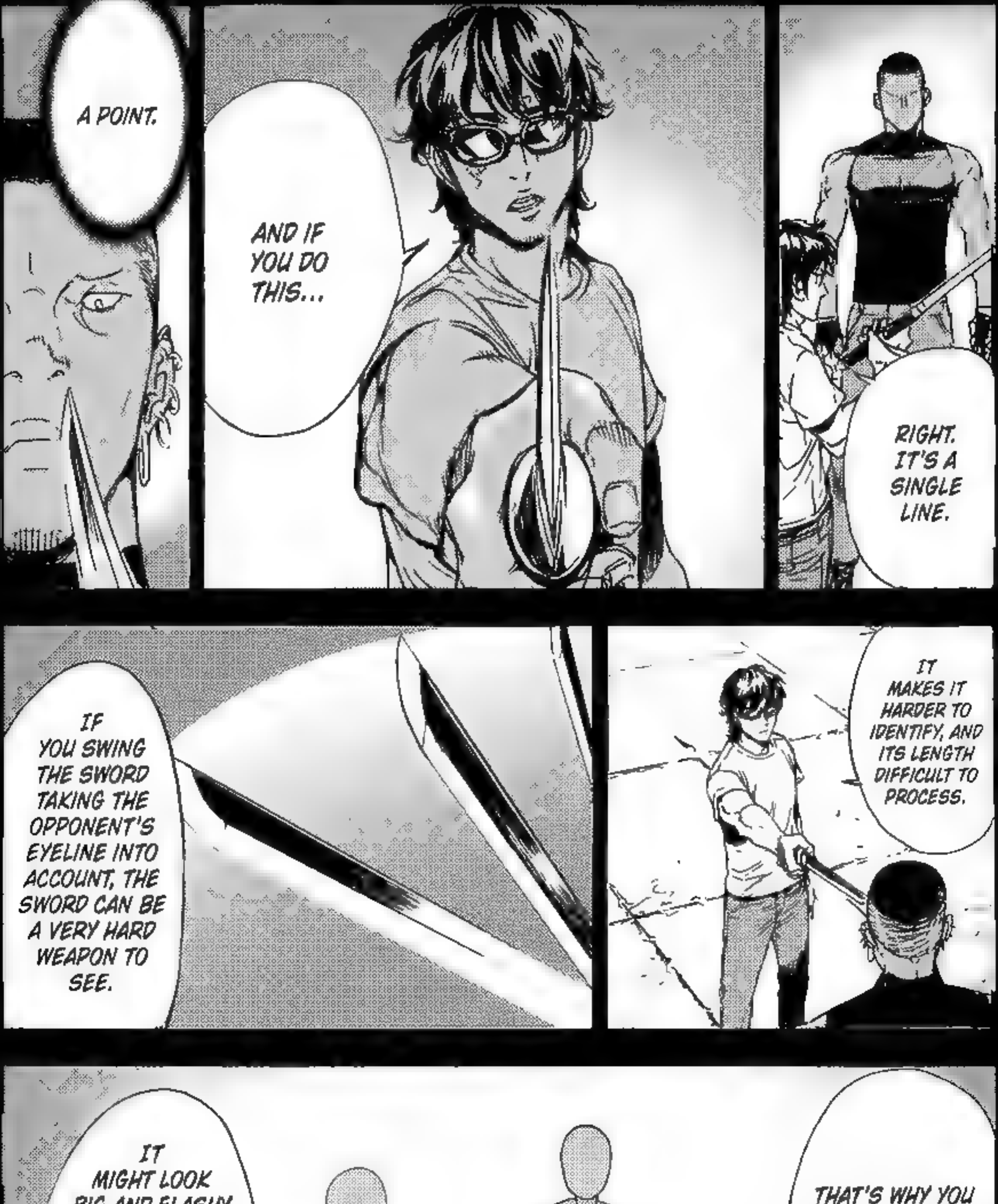
chapter 198

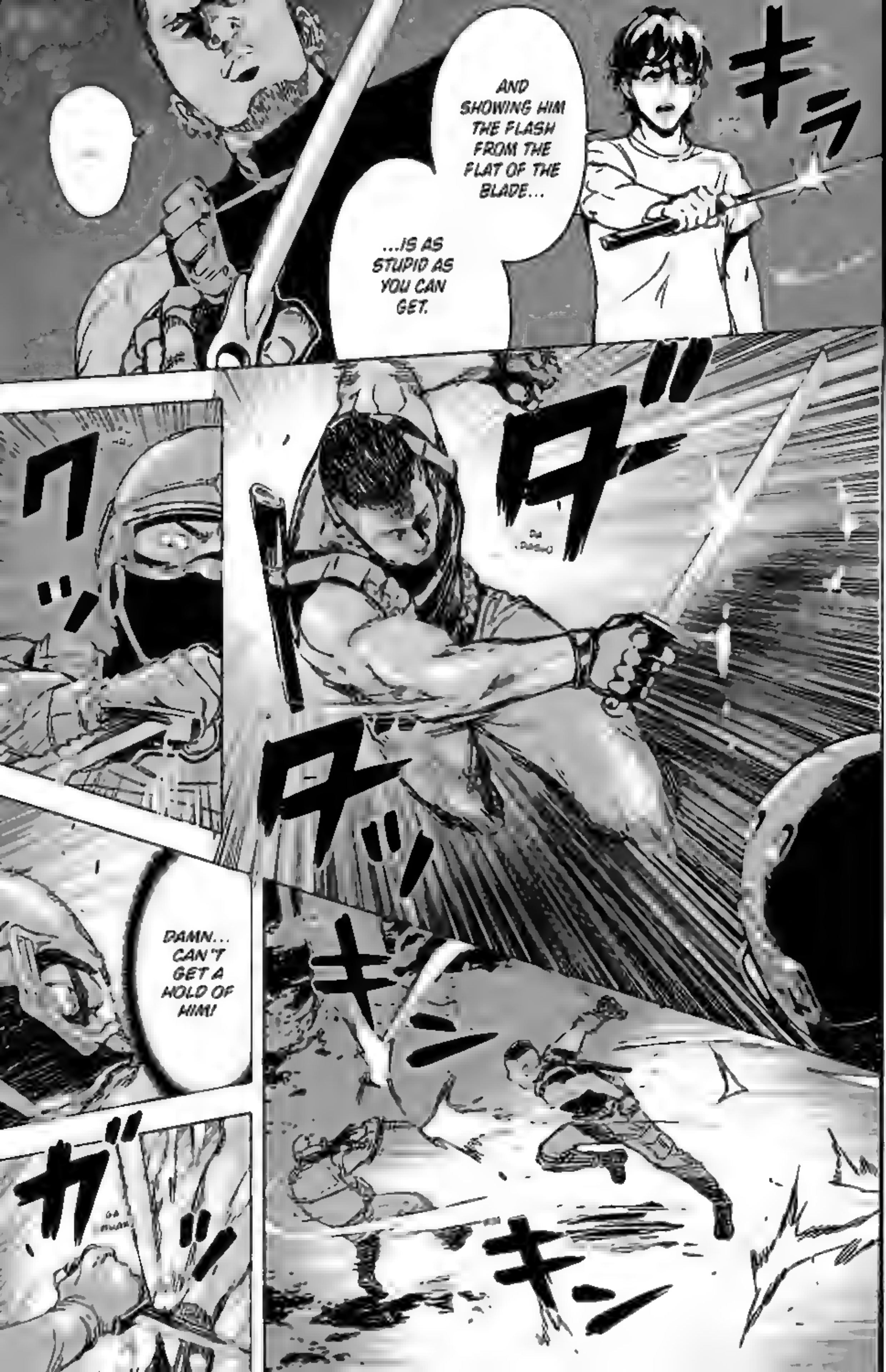

OUR FOE'S ACTIONS ARE SHARP.
NO WORRIES. THE BLACK UNIT IS STILL ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST ELITE FORCES.
AND AMONG THEM, THE TRUMPS HAVE BEEN UPGRADED IN CLOSE-QUARTERS COMBAT BY OUR INSTRUCTOR HERE.
THEIR TACTICS CAME FROM ZELM, AND THE OVERALL PLAN FROM ME.
THERE IS NO WEAK LINK!
AND WHO SAID THAT?
...GOOD QUESTION.
"ONLY FIGHT IF YOU ARE ASSURED OF VICTORY."
THIS IS THE FIRST RULE OF COMBAT.
BUT HE IS A DIFFERENT MATTER.

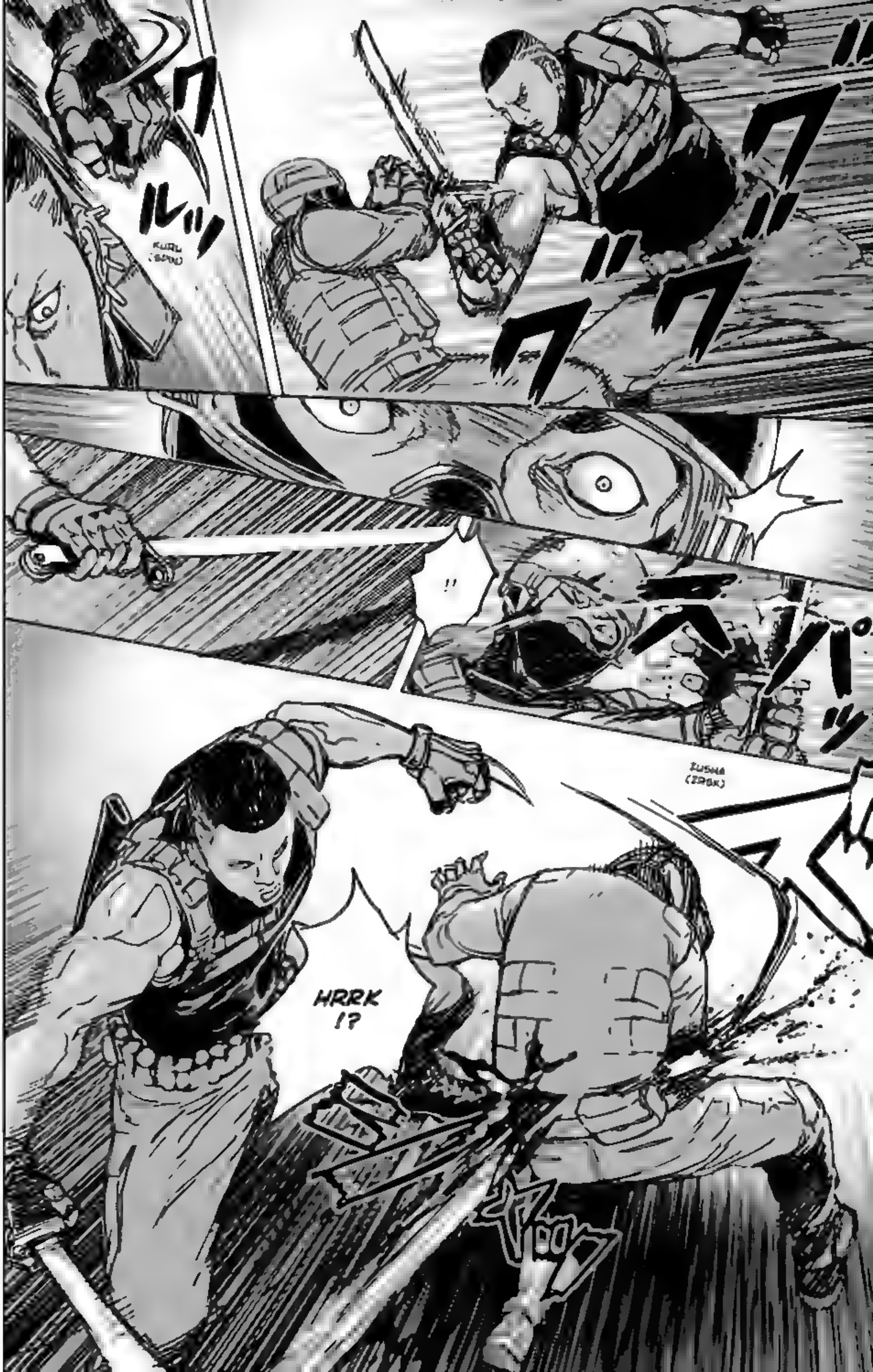

WE MUST BE PREPARED FOR SOME LEVEL OF ATTRITION.
CAN YOU ISSUE A SUMMONS?
YES, OF COURSE.
バババ
BA
BA
BA
BA
ガッ
GA (WHAK)
GA
ザッ
ZA (ZSHH)
パパパパ
PA (POP) PA
PA
PA
ダダダ
DA
DA
DA

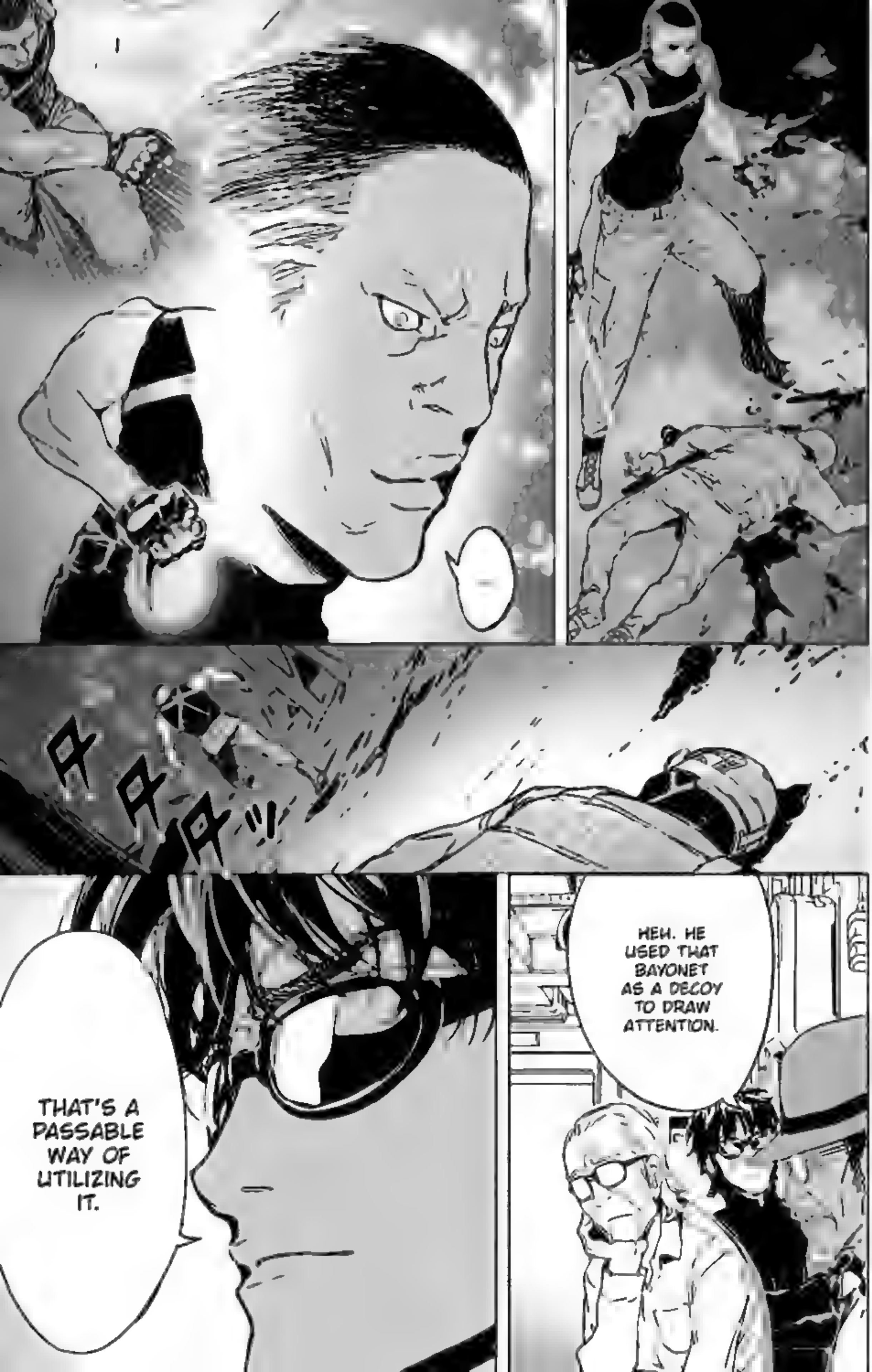

パシュ
パシュ
GUIN KWANG
グン
ザッ
—!
HMM !?

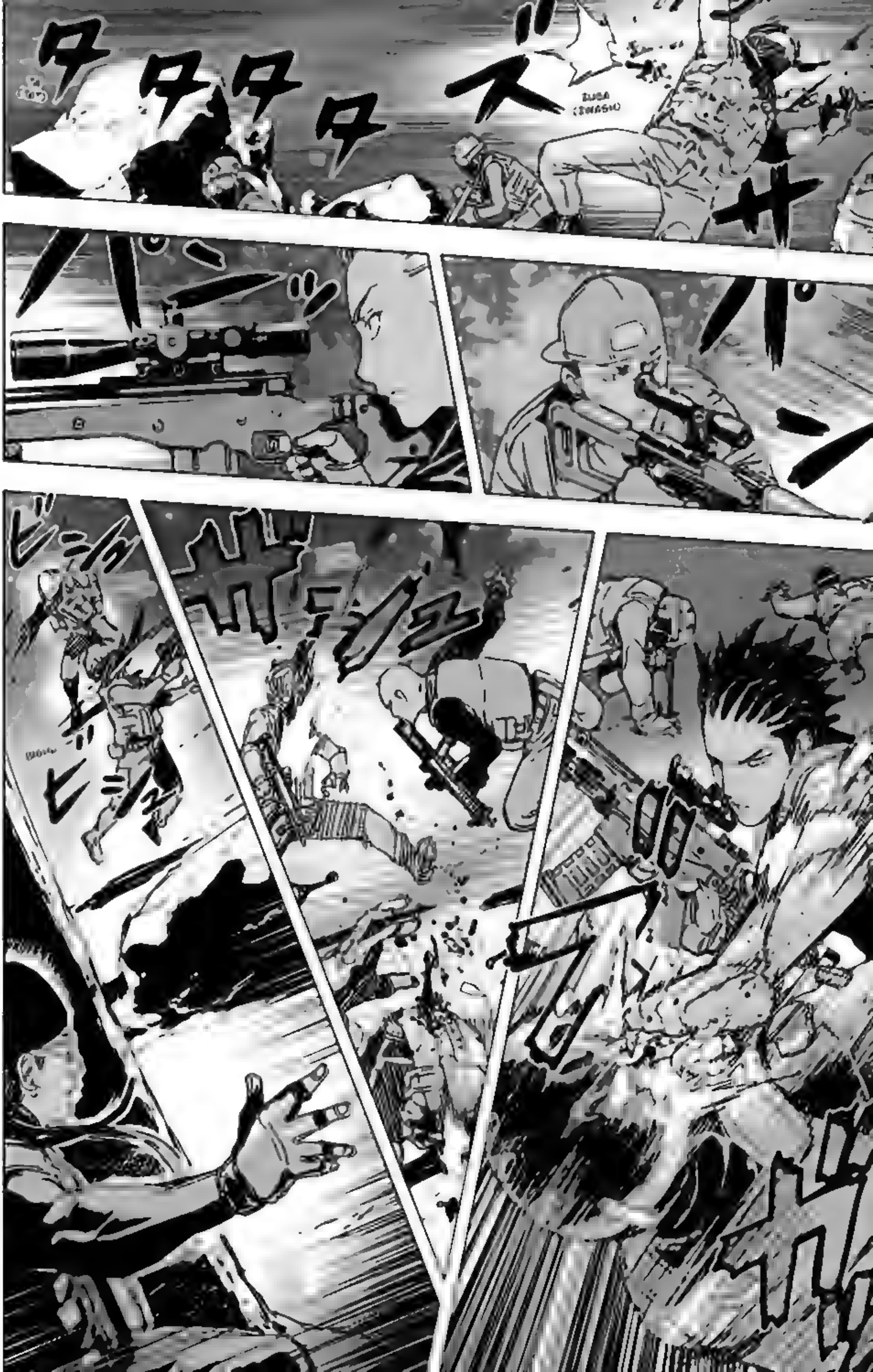

...
BUOOON (WOMMM)
ブオオオン
WHEN YOU DO THIS WITH A SWORD...
...WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO YOU?
...
!?
IT'S A LINE.


RIGHT. IT'S A SINGLE LINE.
AND IF YOU DO THIS...
A POINT.
IT MAKES IT HARDER TO IDENTIFY, AND ITS LENGTH DIFFICULT TO PROCESS.
IF YOU SWING THE SWORD TAKING THE OPPONENT'S EYELINE INTO ACCOUNT, THE SWORD CAN BE A VERY HARD WEAPON TO SEE.
THAT'S WHY YOU SHOULD ALWAYS FACE THE ENEMY WITH THE SWORD TOWARD HIM.
IT MIGHT LOOK BIG AND FLASHY WHEN YOU'RE SWINGING FROM THE SIDE, BUT HEAD-ON, IT'S DIFFICULT TO IDENTIFY WHAT'S HAPPENING.

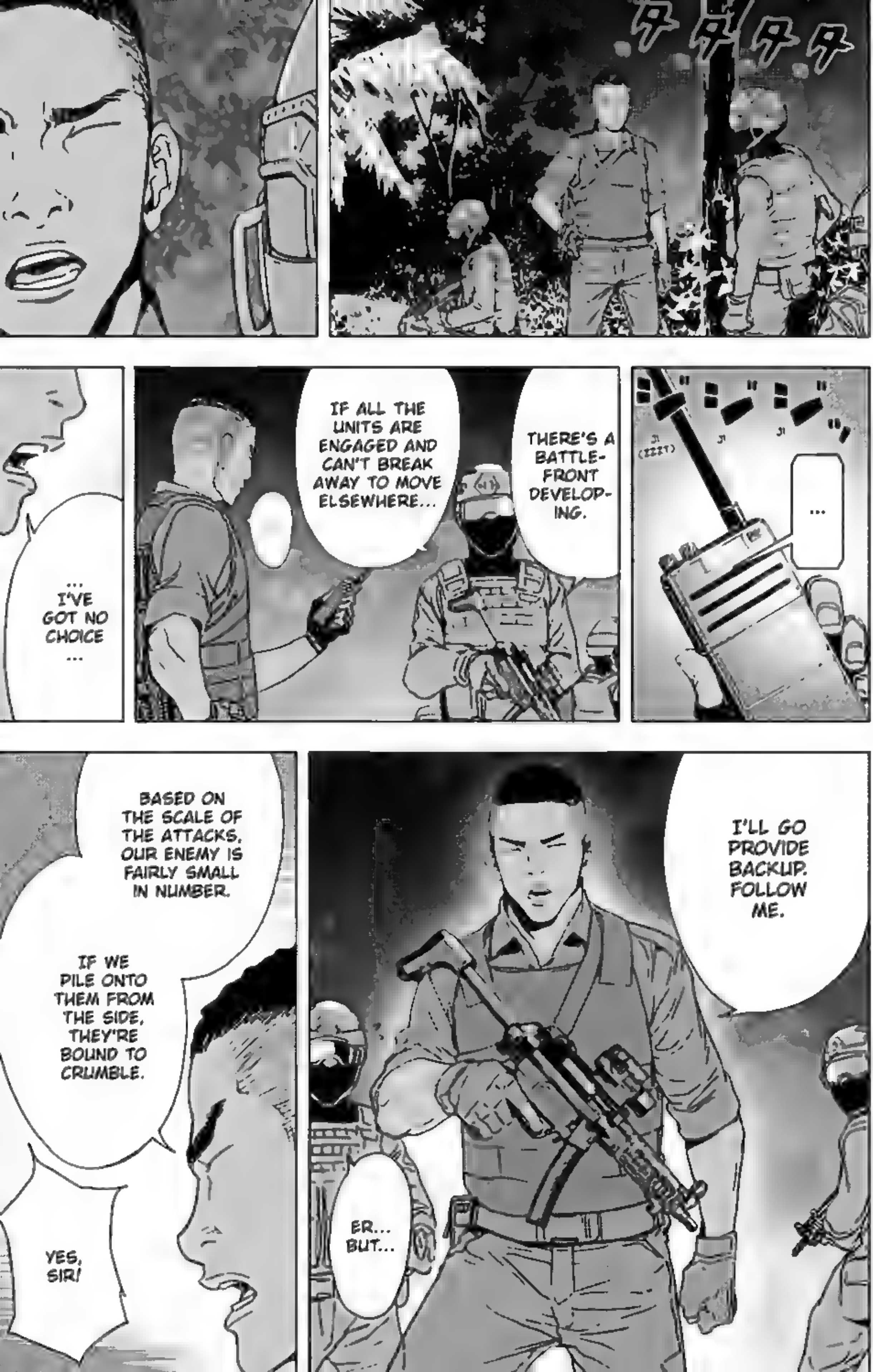

キラ
AND SHOWING HIM THE FLASH FROM THE FLAT OF THE BLADE...
...IS AS STUPID AS YOU CAN GET.
...
ダ
DA (DASH)
ダッ
クッ
DAMN... CAN'T GET A HOLD OF HIM!
キン
キン
ガッ
GA WHAM!

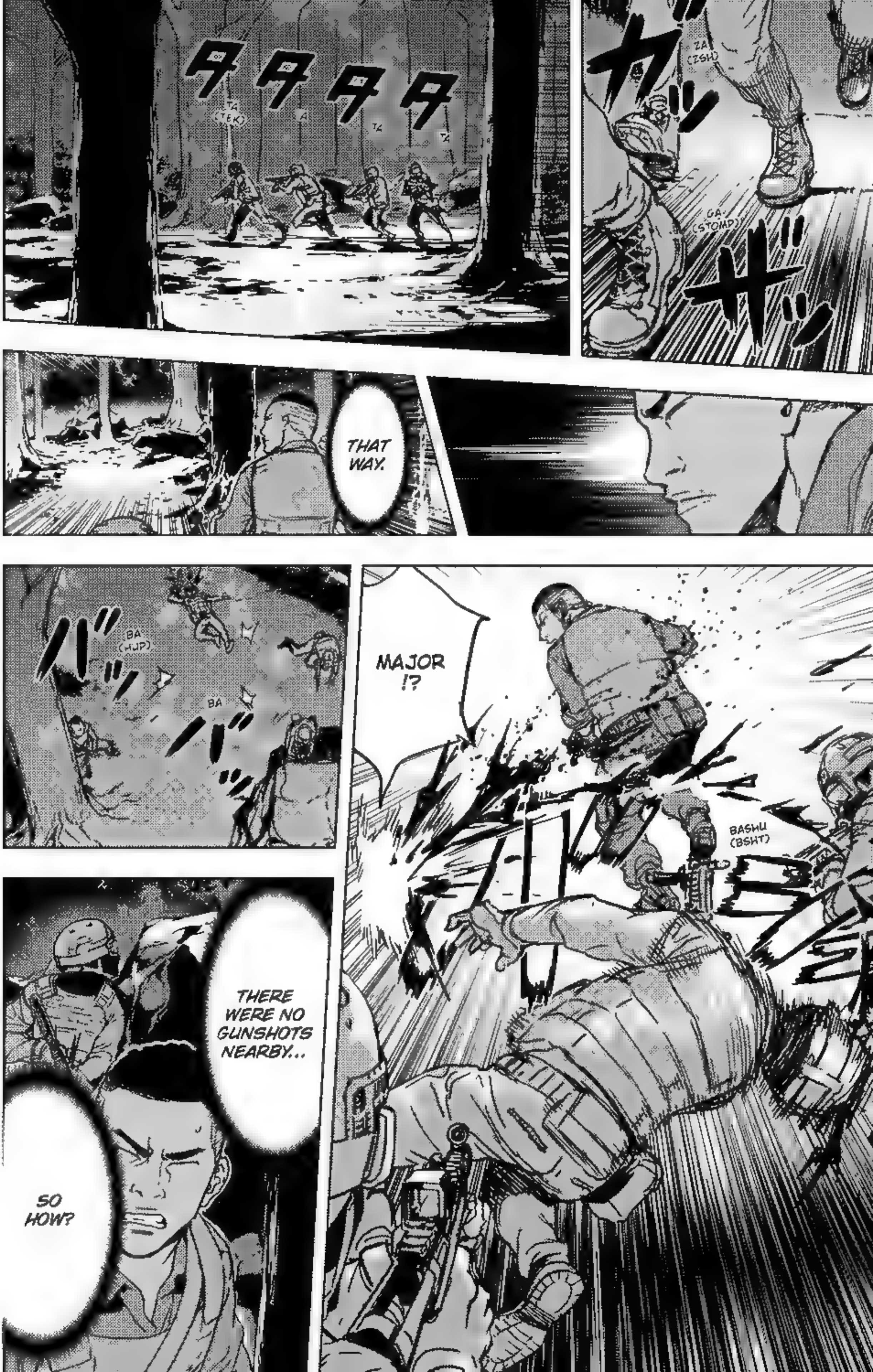

クルッ
KURU (SPIN)
グググ
!!
スパッ
ZUSHA (ZBSK)
HRRK !?
ズ

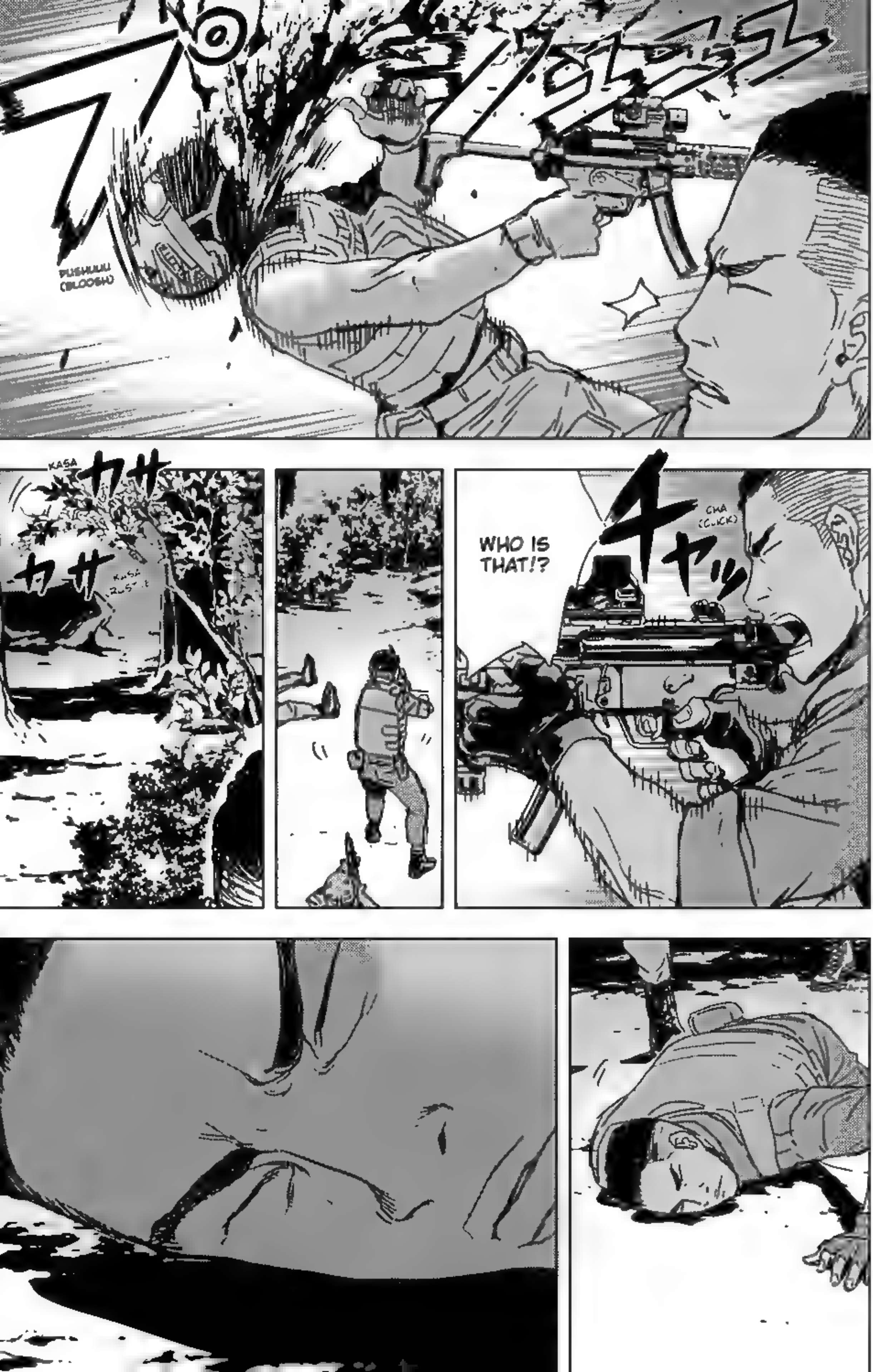

—
タタタッ
HEH. HE USED THAT BAYONET AS A DECOY TO DRAW ATTENTION.
THAT'S A PASSABLE WAY OF UTILIZING IT.

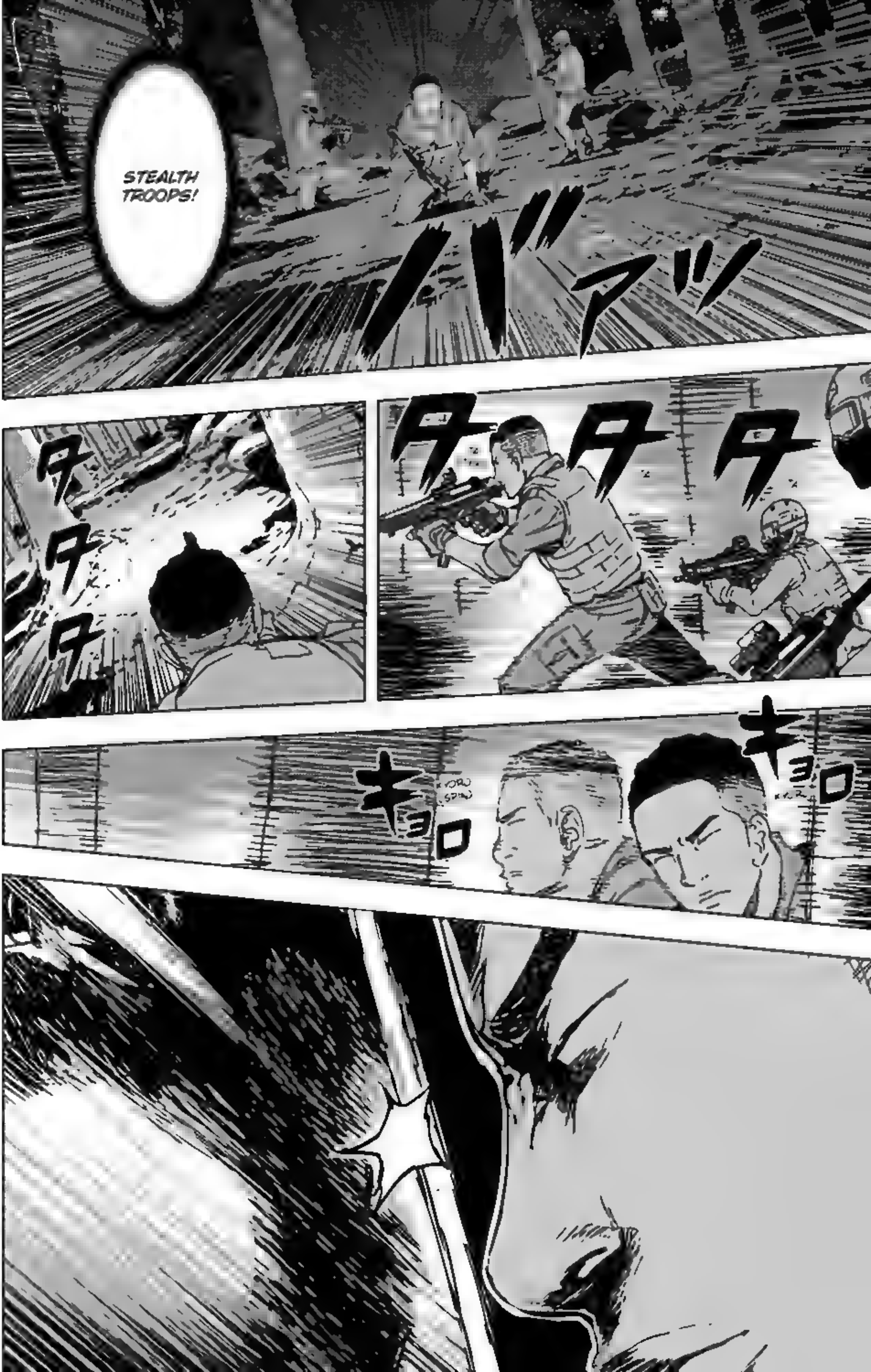


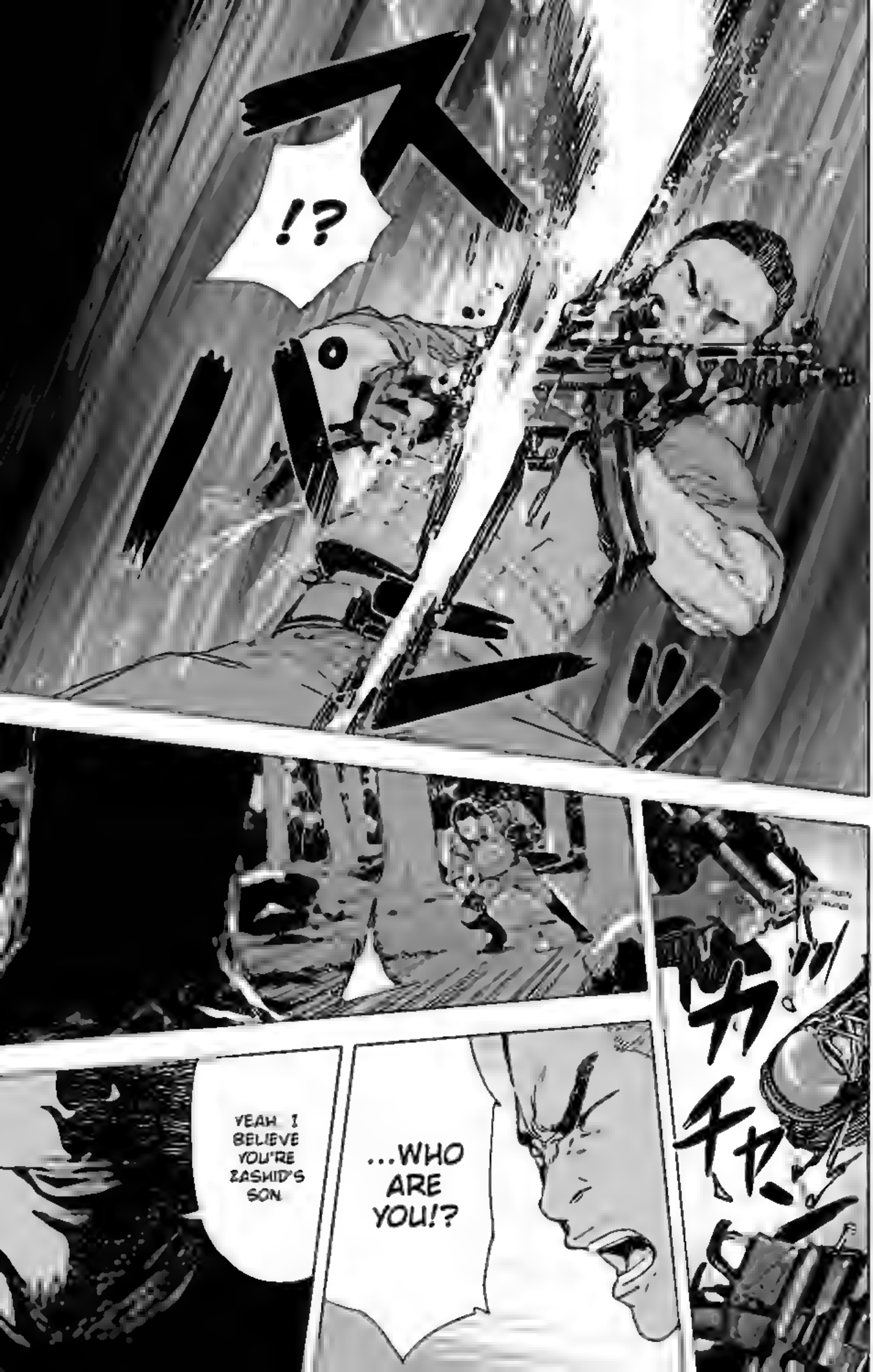
ズバ
ZUBA
(ZWASH)
ザ
タタタタタ
パン
パパン
ガチン
ビシッ
WHOW
ビシ
ズ

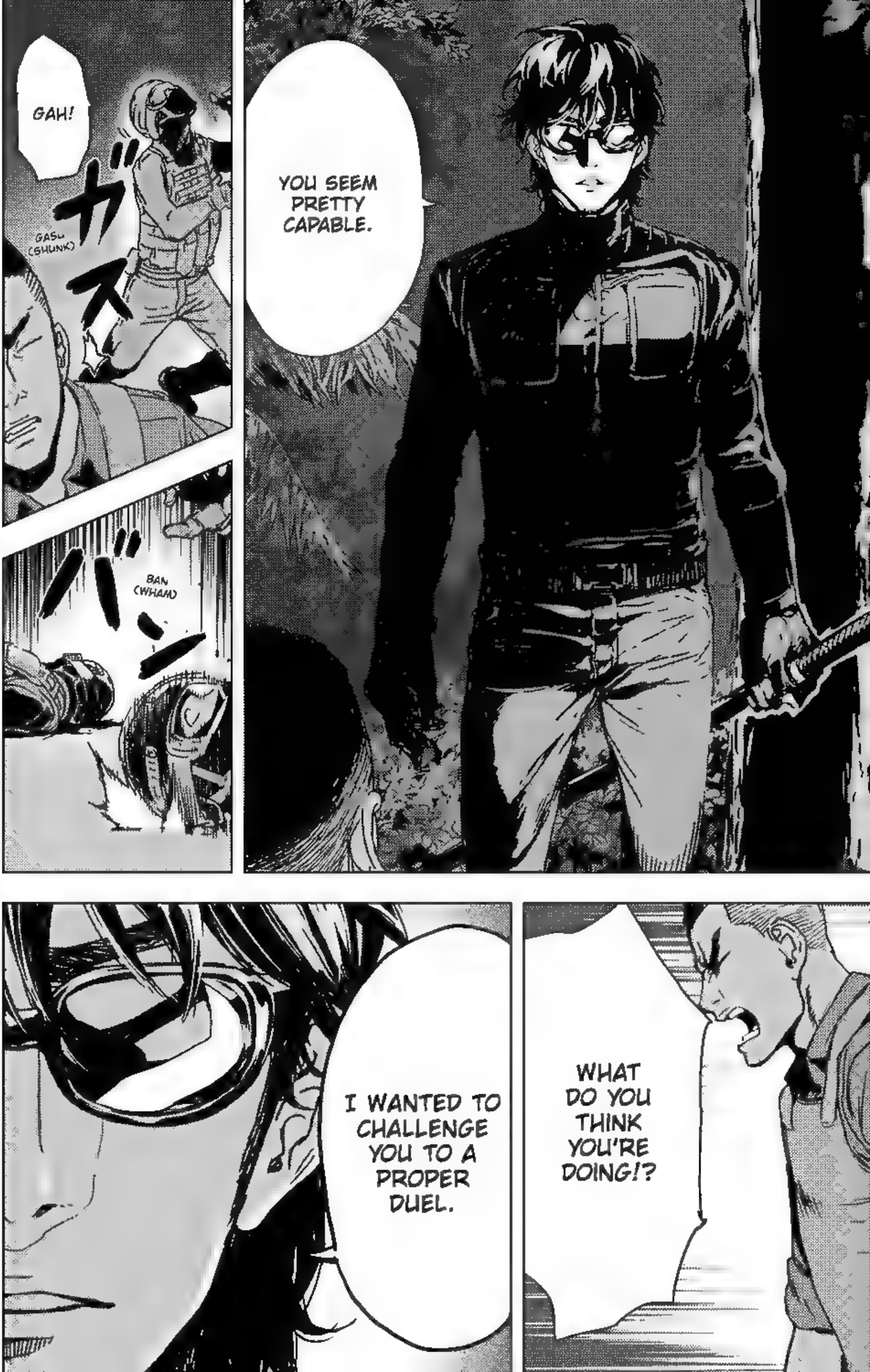

タタタタ
(ZZZT)
...
THERE'S A BATTLE-FRONT DEVELOPING.
IF ALL THE UNITS ARE ENGAGED AND CAN'T BREAK AWAY TO MOVE ELSEWHERE...
... I'VE GOT NO CHOICE ...
I'LL GO PROVIDE BACKUP. FOLLOW ME.
ER... BUT...
BASED ON THE SCALE OF THE ATTACKS, OUR ENEMY IS FAIRLY SMALL IN NUMBER.
IF WE PILE ONTO THEM FROM THE SIDE, THEY'RE BOUND TO CRUMBLE.
YES, SIR!

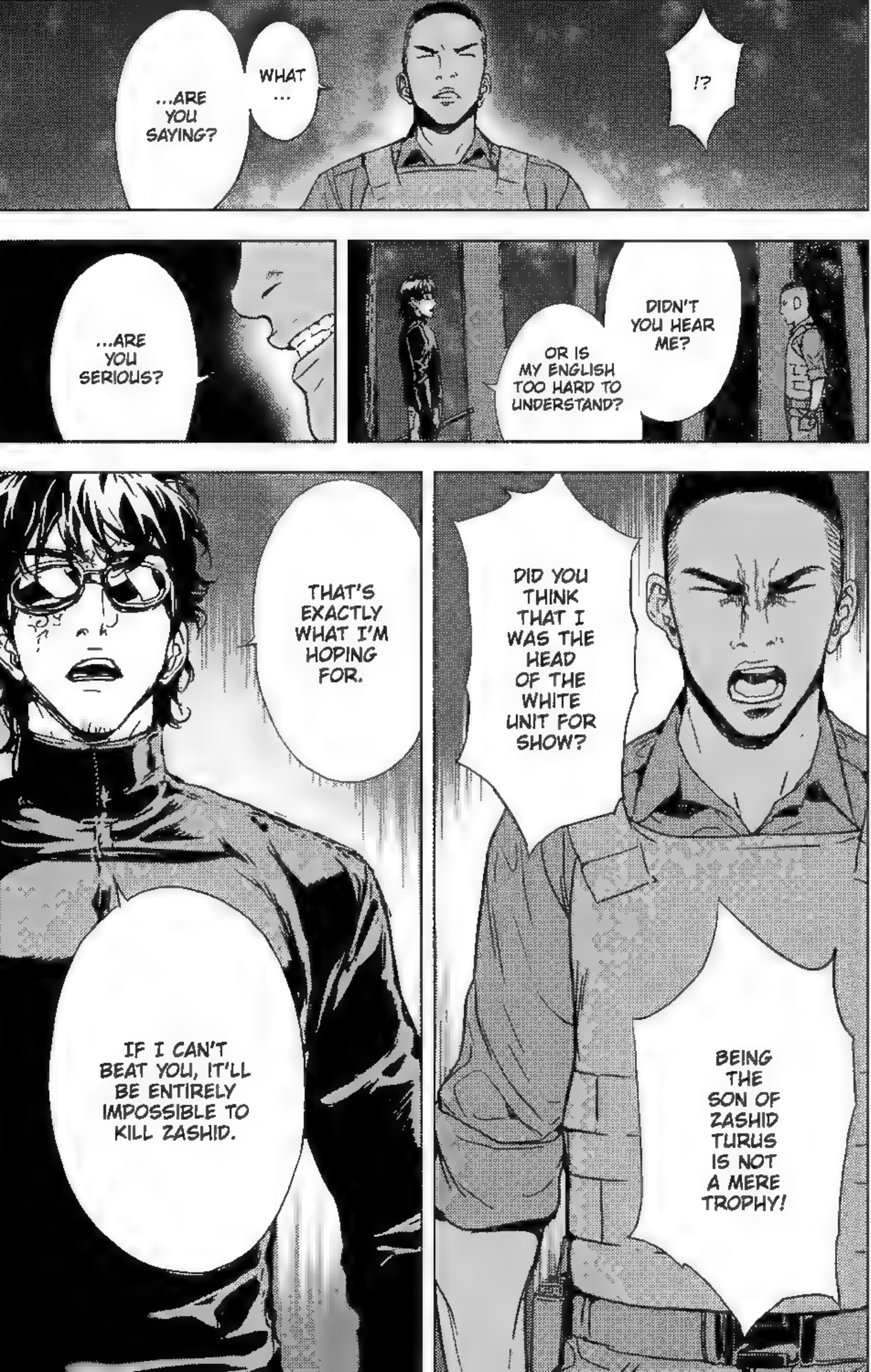

ZA (ZSH)
GA (STOMP)
TA (TEK)
TA
TA
TA
THAT WAY.
MAJOR !?
BASHU (BSHT)
BA (HUP)
BA
THERE WERE NO GUNSHOTS NEARBY...
SO HOW?

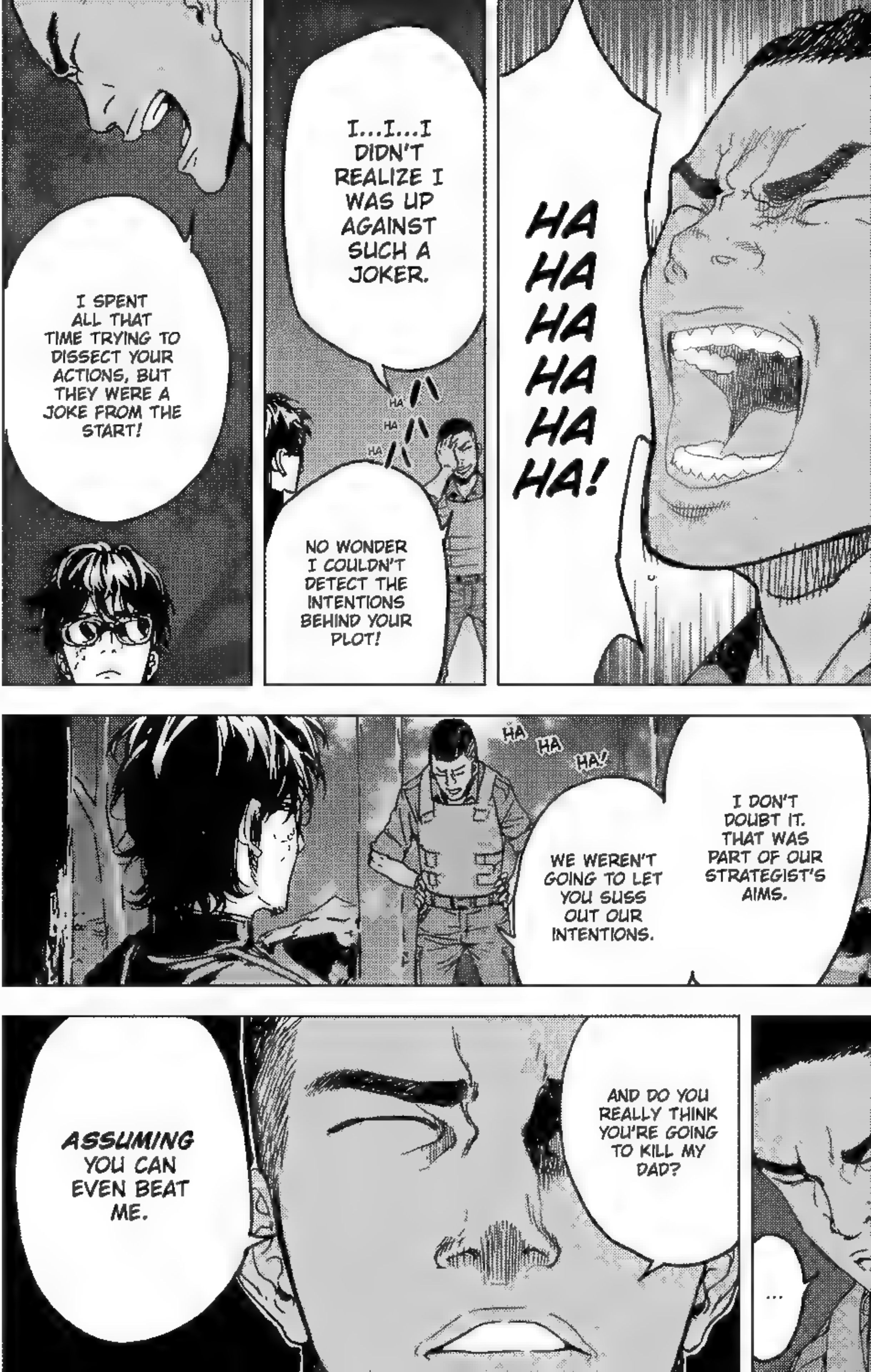

プシュウウウ
PUSHUUU (BLOOSH)
チャッ
CHA (CLICK)
WHO IS THAT!?
カサ
KASA
カサ
KASA RUSTLE

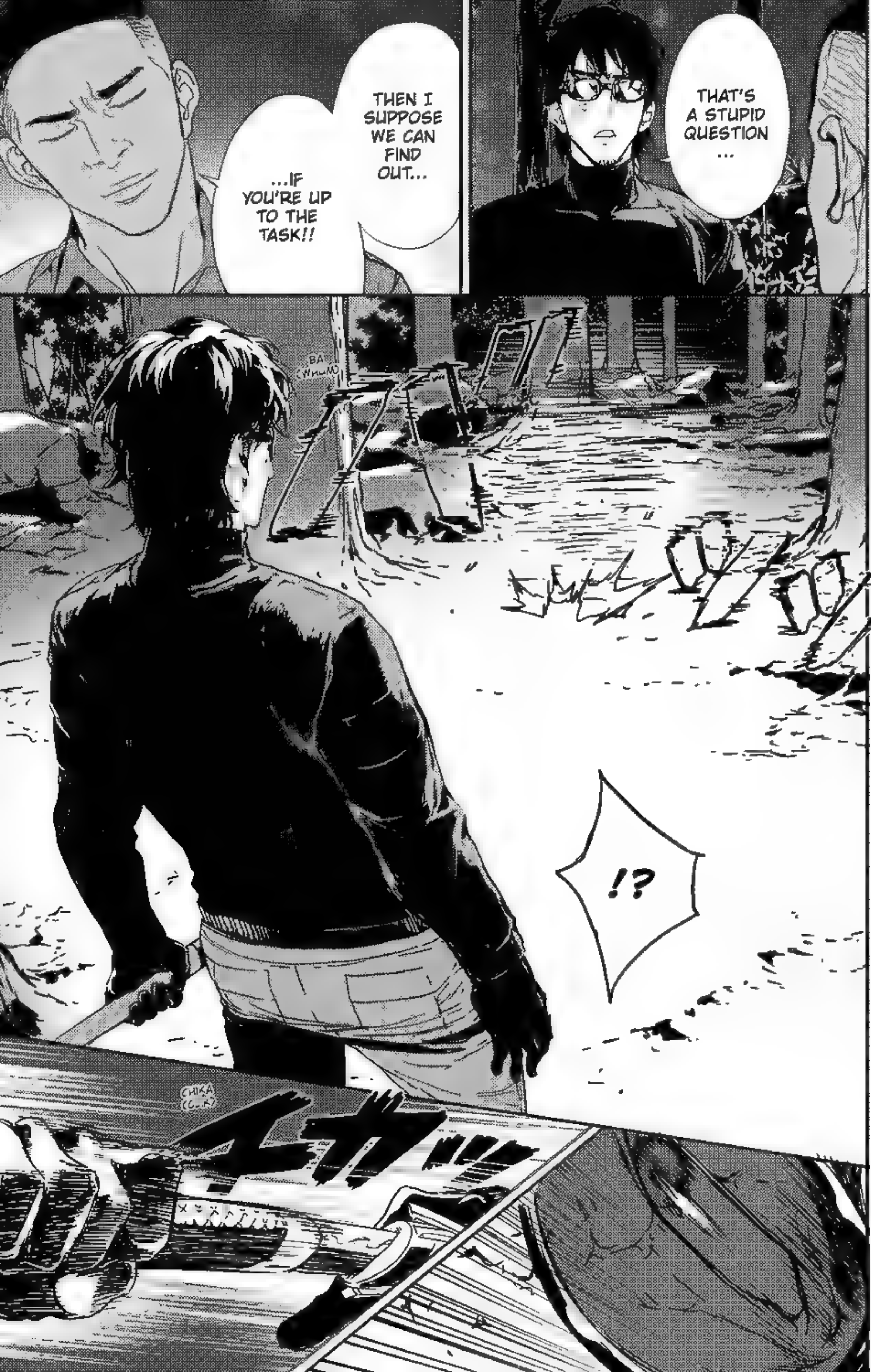

STEALTH TROOPS!
バアッ
タ タ タ
タ タ タ
キョロ
KYORO SPIN
キョロ

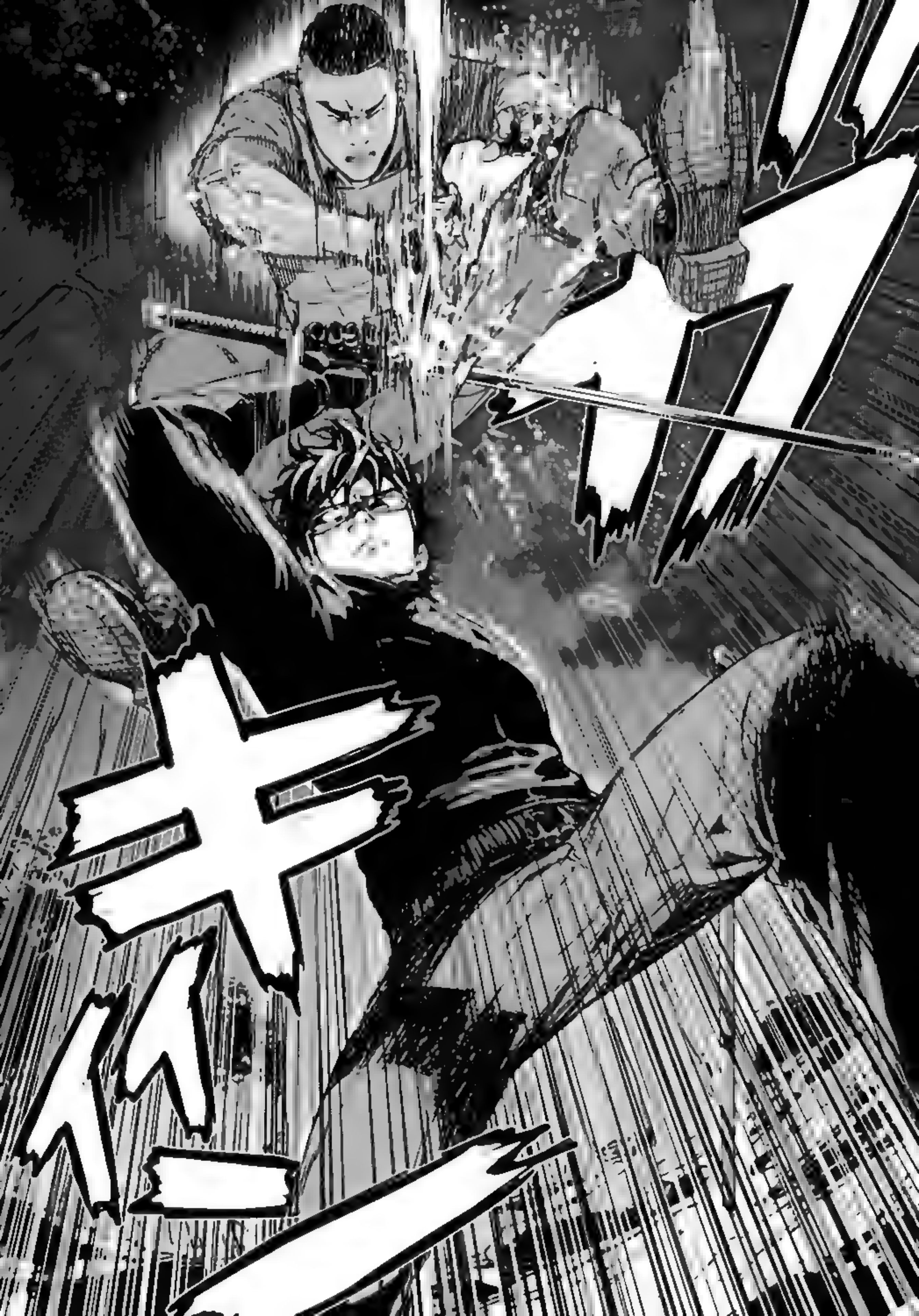

!?
ガッチャー
...WHO ARE YOU!?
YEAH. I BELIEVE YOU'RE ZASHID'S SON.

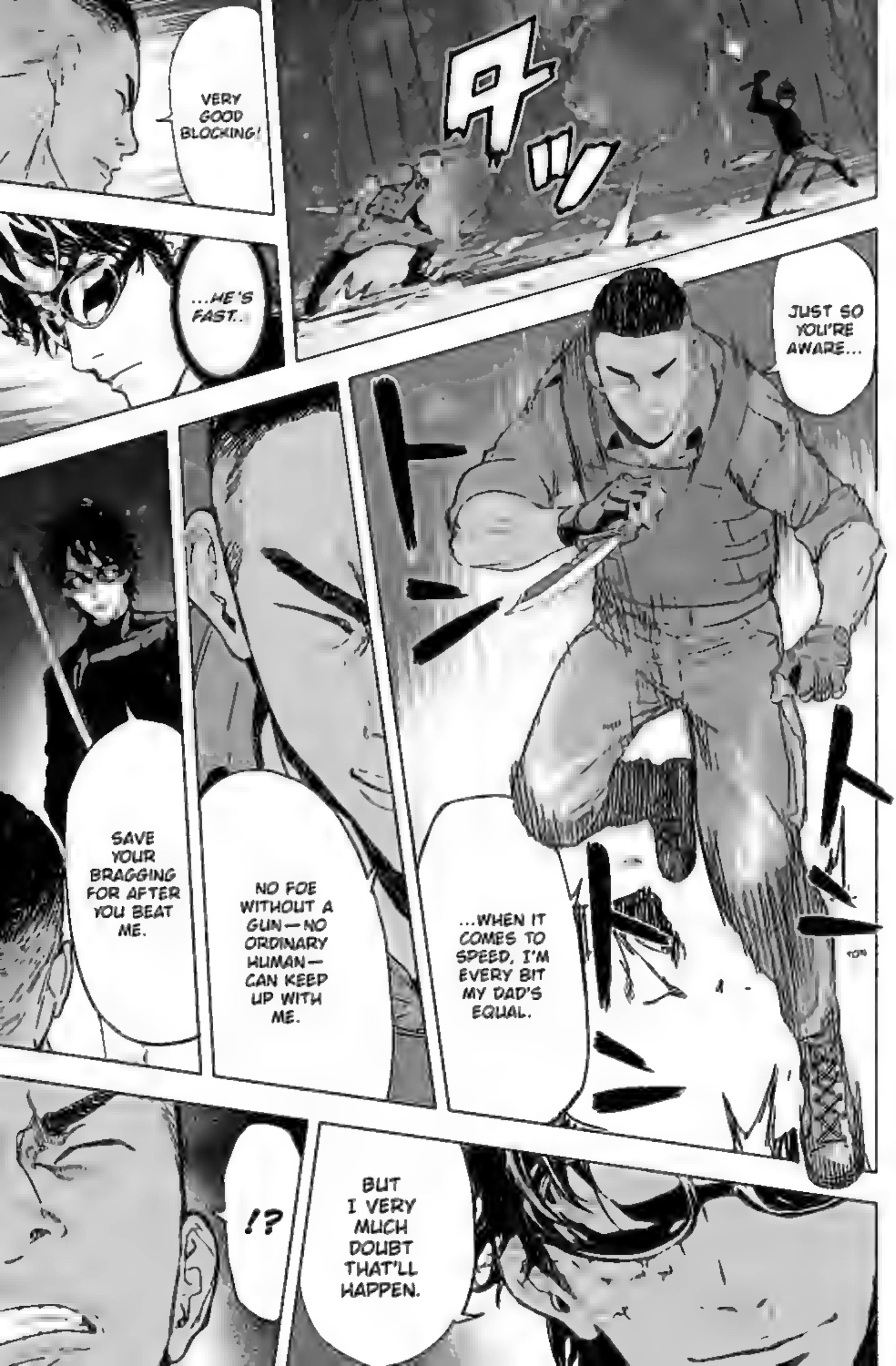

YOU SEEM PRETTY CAPABLE.
GAH!
ガス
GASU (SHUNK)
バン
BAN (WHAM)
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING!?
I WANTED TO CHALLENGE YOU TO A PROPER DUEL.

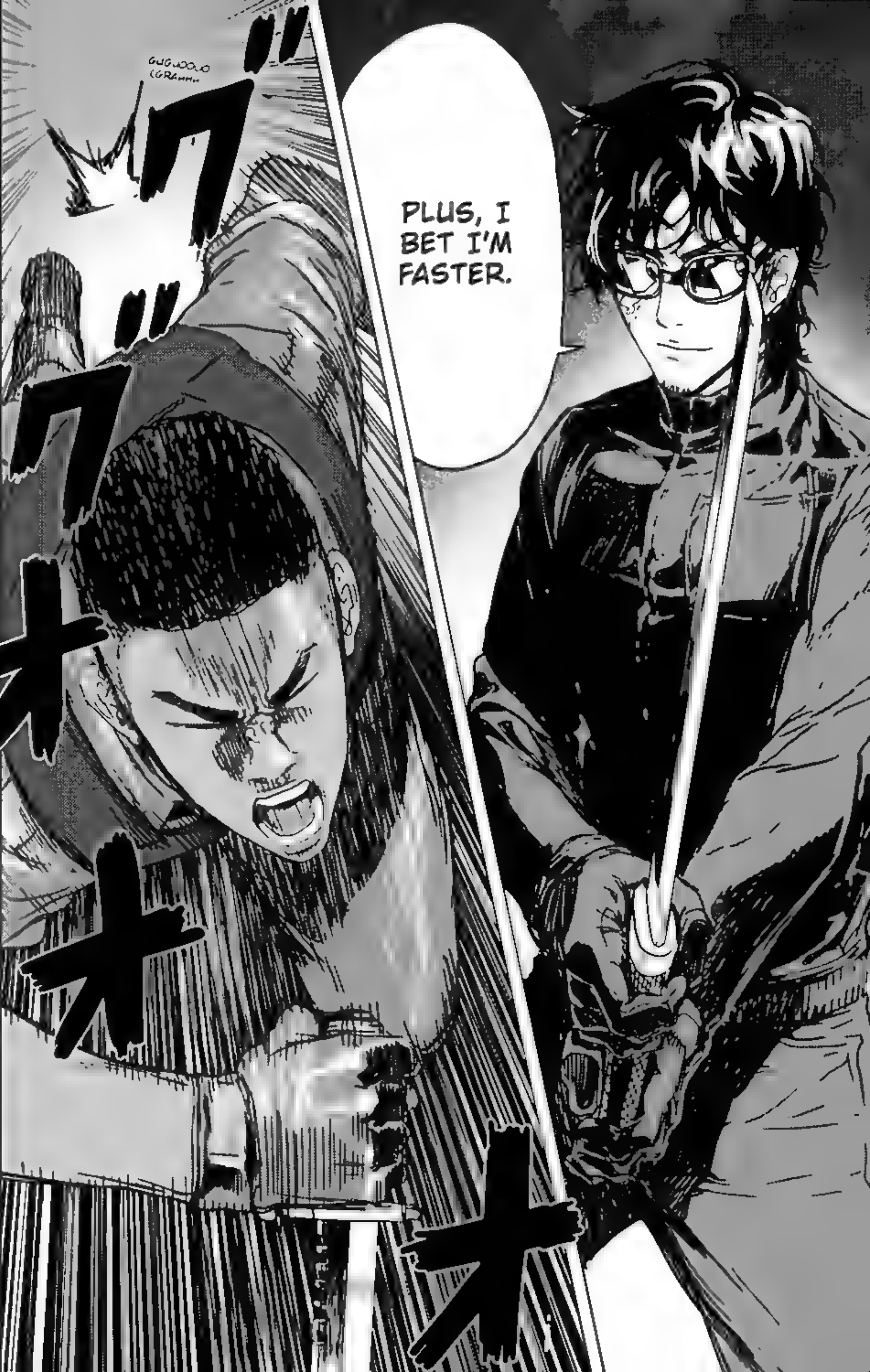

!?
WHAT ...
...ARE YOU SAYING?
DIDN'T YOU HEAR ME?
OR IS MY ENGLISH TOO HARD TO UNDERSTAND?
...ARE YOU SERIOUS?
DID YOU THINK THAT I WAS THE HEAD OF THE WHITE UNIT FOR SHOW?
BEING THE SON OF ZASHID TURUS IS NOT A MERE TROPHY!
THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I'M HOPING FOR.
IF I CAN'T BEAT YOU, IT'LL BE ENTIRELY IMPOSSIBLE TO KILL ZASHID.

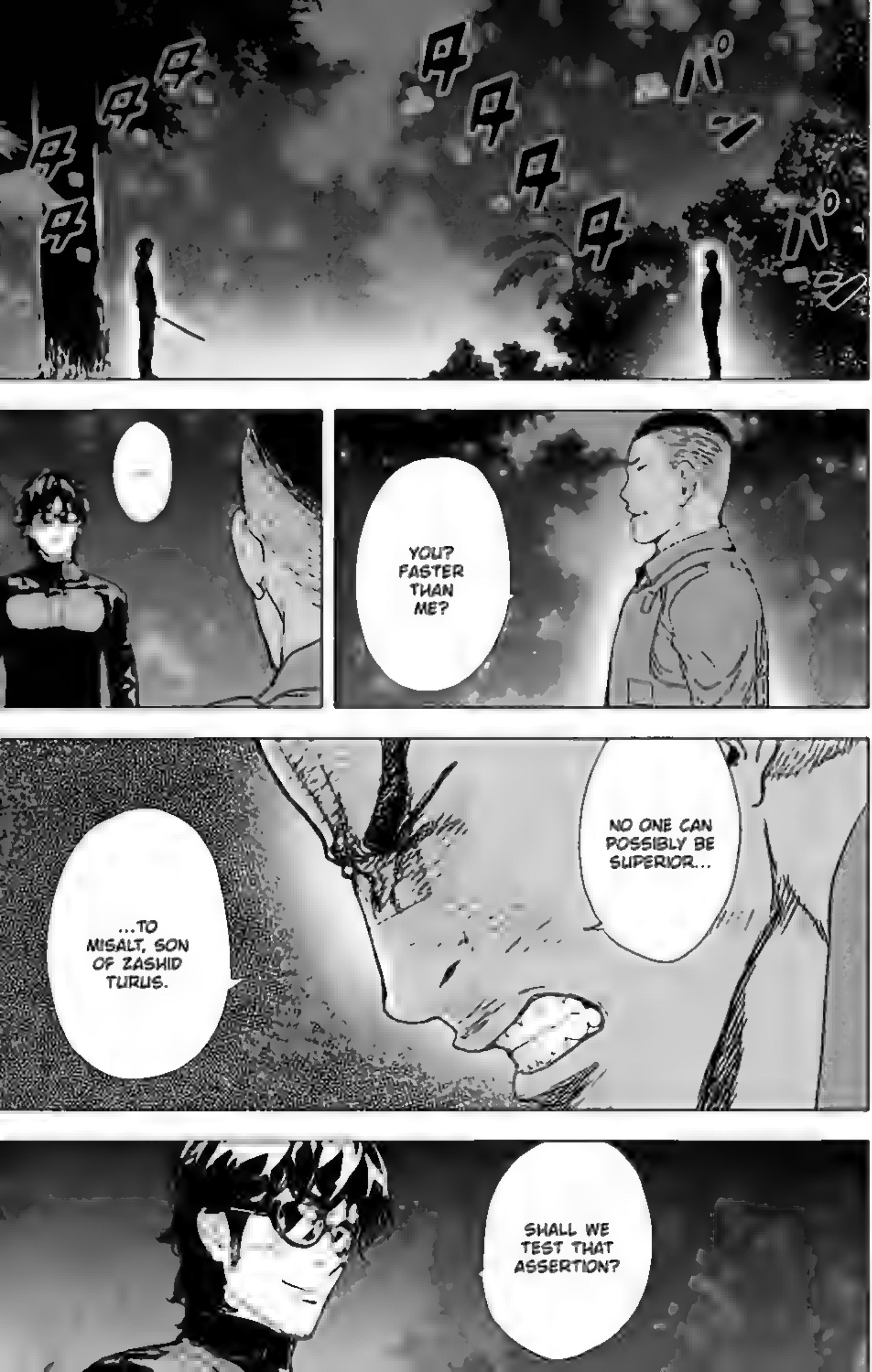

HA HA HA HA HA HA!
HA HA HA
I...I...I DIDN'T REALIZE I WAS UP AGAINST SUCH A JOKER.
NO WONDER I COULDN'T DETECT THE INTENTIONS BEHIND YOUR PLOT!
I SPENT ALL THAT TIME TRYING TO DISSECT YOUR ACTIONS, BUT THEY WERE A JOKE FROM THE START!
I DON'T DOUBT IT. THAT WAS PART OF OUR STRATEGIST'S AIMS.
WE WEREN'T GOING TO LET YOU SUSS OUT OUR INTENTIONS.
HA HA HA!
...
AND DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU'RE GOING TO KILL MY DAD?
ASSUMING YOU CAN EVEN BEAT ME.

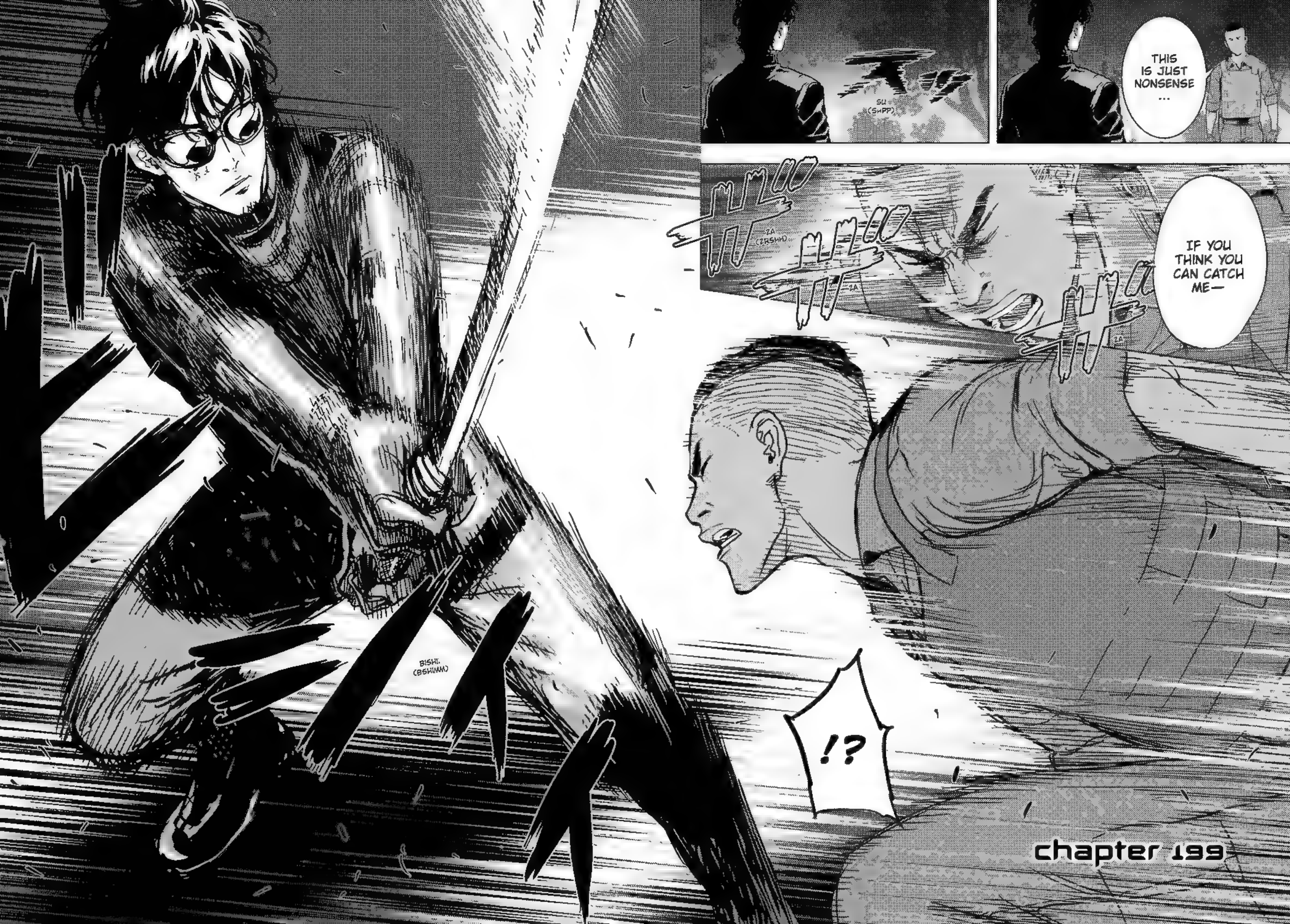

THAT'S A STUPID QUESTION ...
THEN I SUPPOSE WE CAN FIND OUT...
...IF YOU'RE UP TO THE TASK!!
BA (WHUMP)
!?
CHIKA (CLIK)


ガキィン

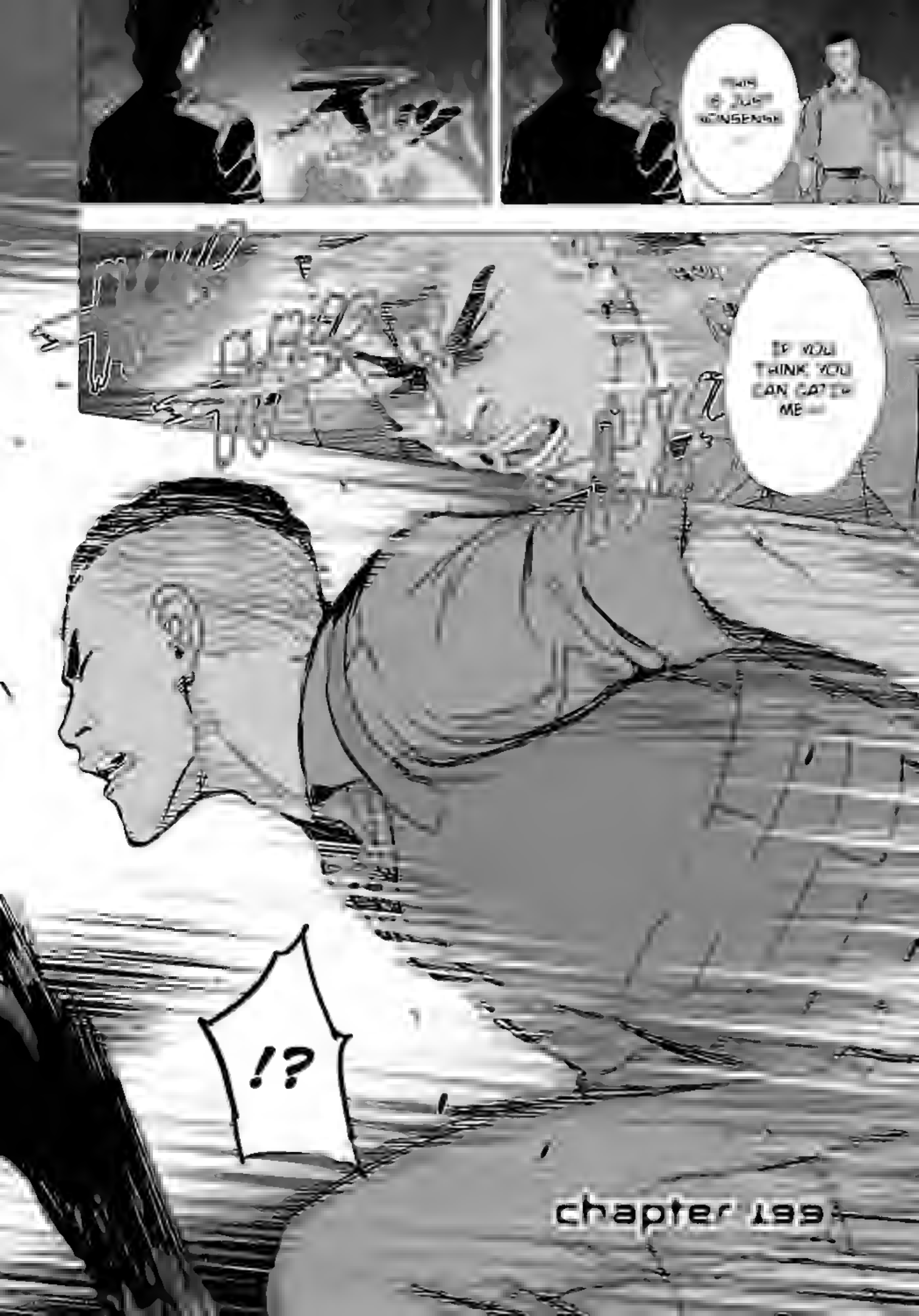

ダッ
VERY GOOD BLOCKING!
...HE'S FAST..
JUST SO YOU'RE AWARE...
ト
ト
ト
...WHEN IT COMES TO SPEED, I'M EVERY BIT MY DAD'S EQUAL.
NO FOE WITHOUT A GUN—NO ORDINARY HUMAN—CAN KEEP UP WITH ME.
SAVE YOUR BRAGGING FOR AFTER YOU BEAT ME.
BUT I VERY MUCH DOUBT THAT'LL HAPPEN.
!?

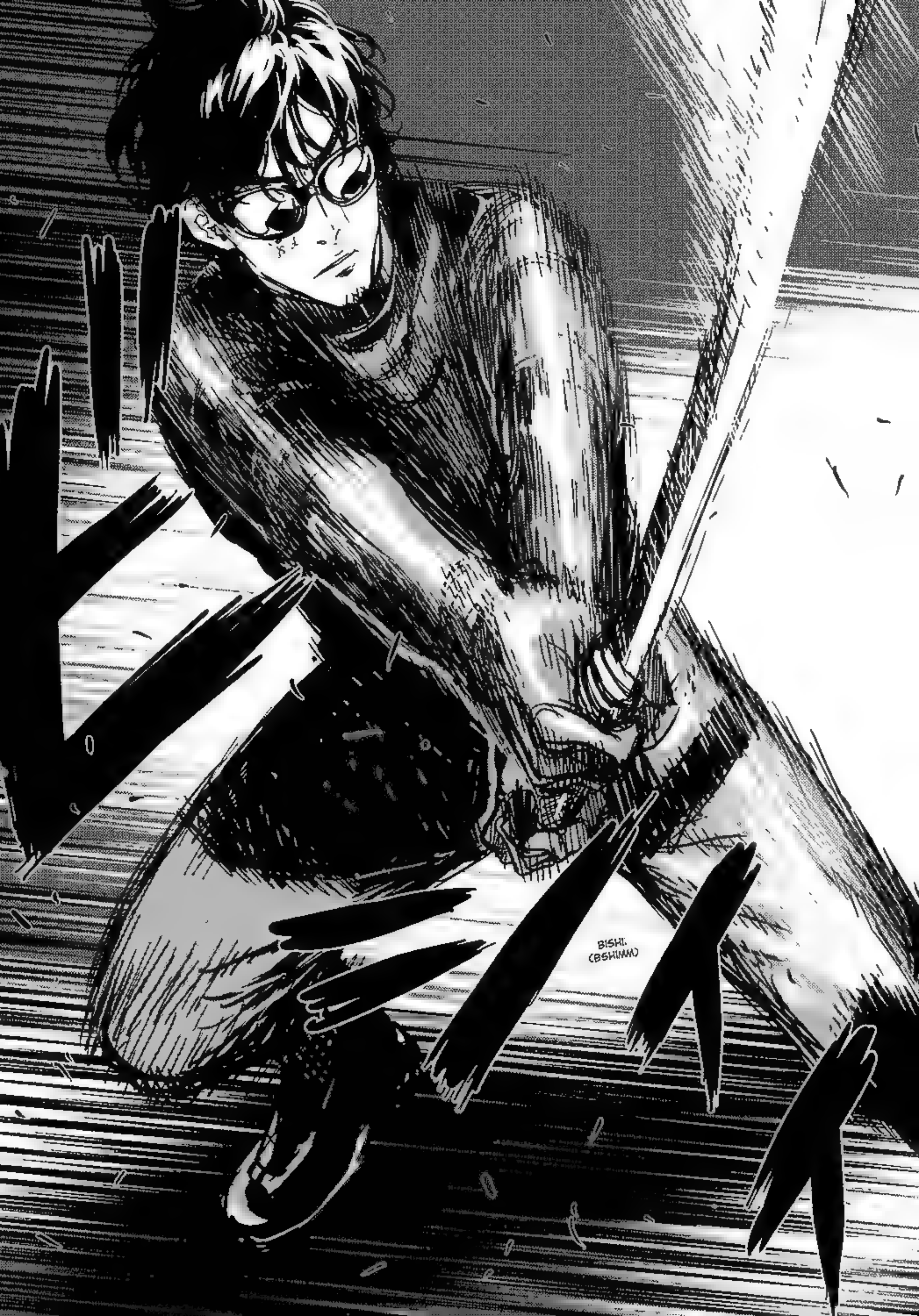

PLUS, I BET I'M FASTER.
GUGUOOO (GRAHHH

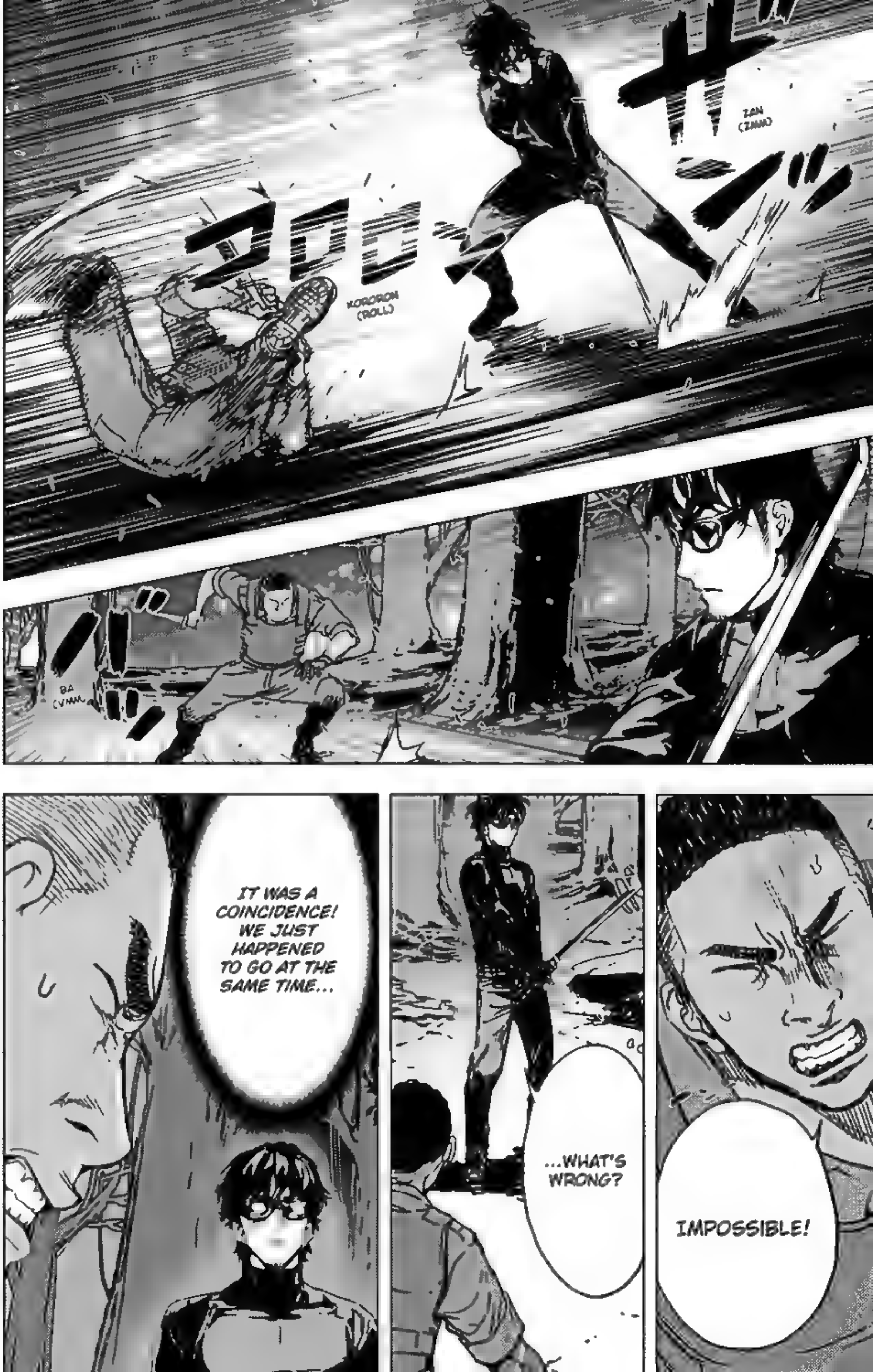

パン
パン
タタタタ
タタタタ
YOU? FASTER THAN ME?
—
NO ONE CAN POSSIBLY BE SUPERIOR...
...TO MISALT, SON OF ZASHID TURUS.
SHALL WE TEST THAT ASSERTION?

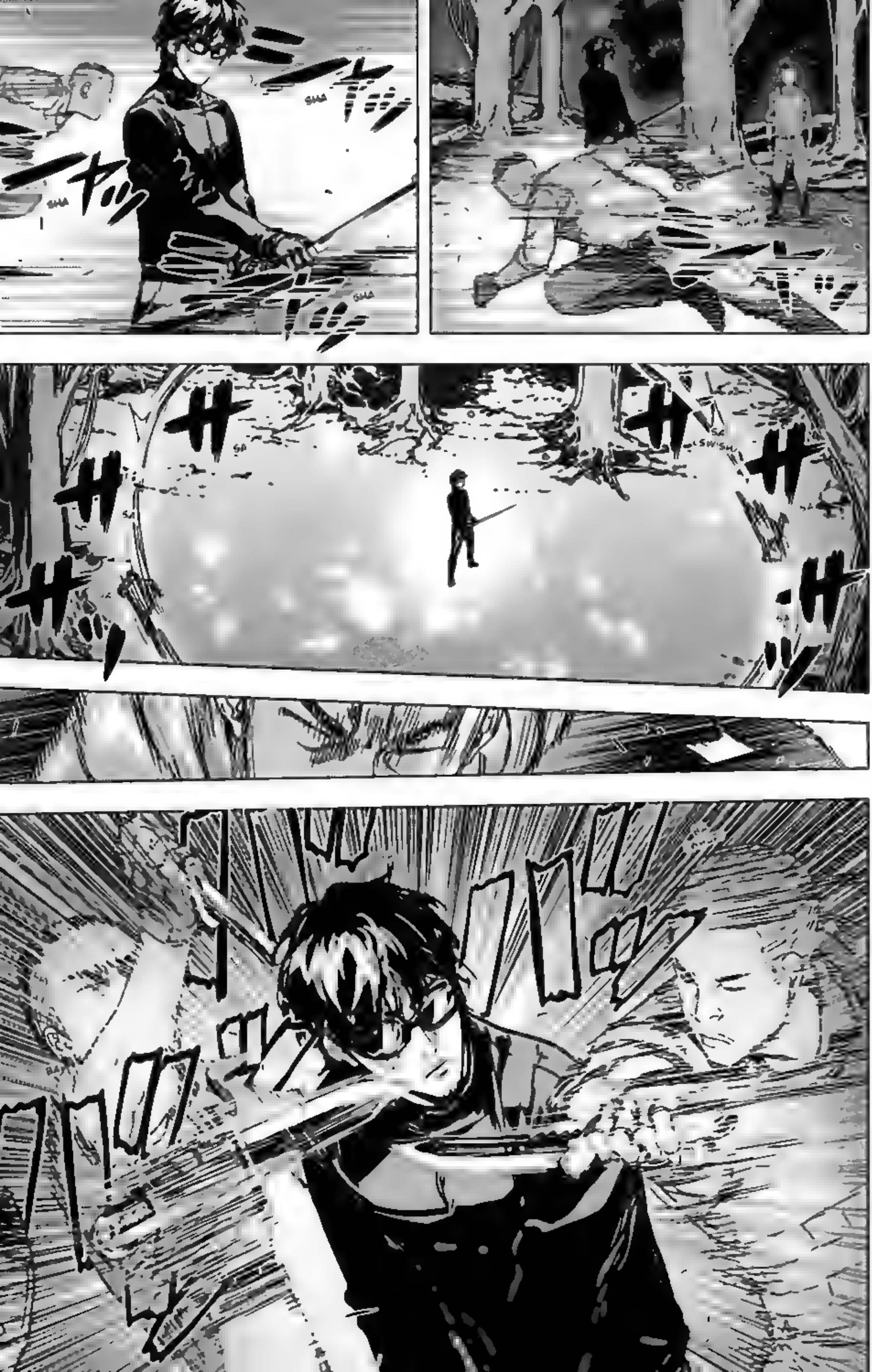

THIS IS JUST NONSENSE …
SU (SHPP)
IF YOU THINK YOU CAN CATCH ME—
ZA (ZRSHH)
ZA
ZA
!?
BISHI (BSHIMM)

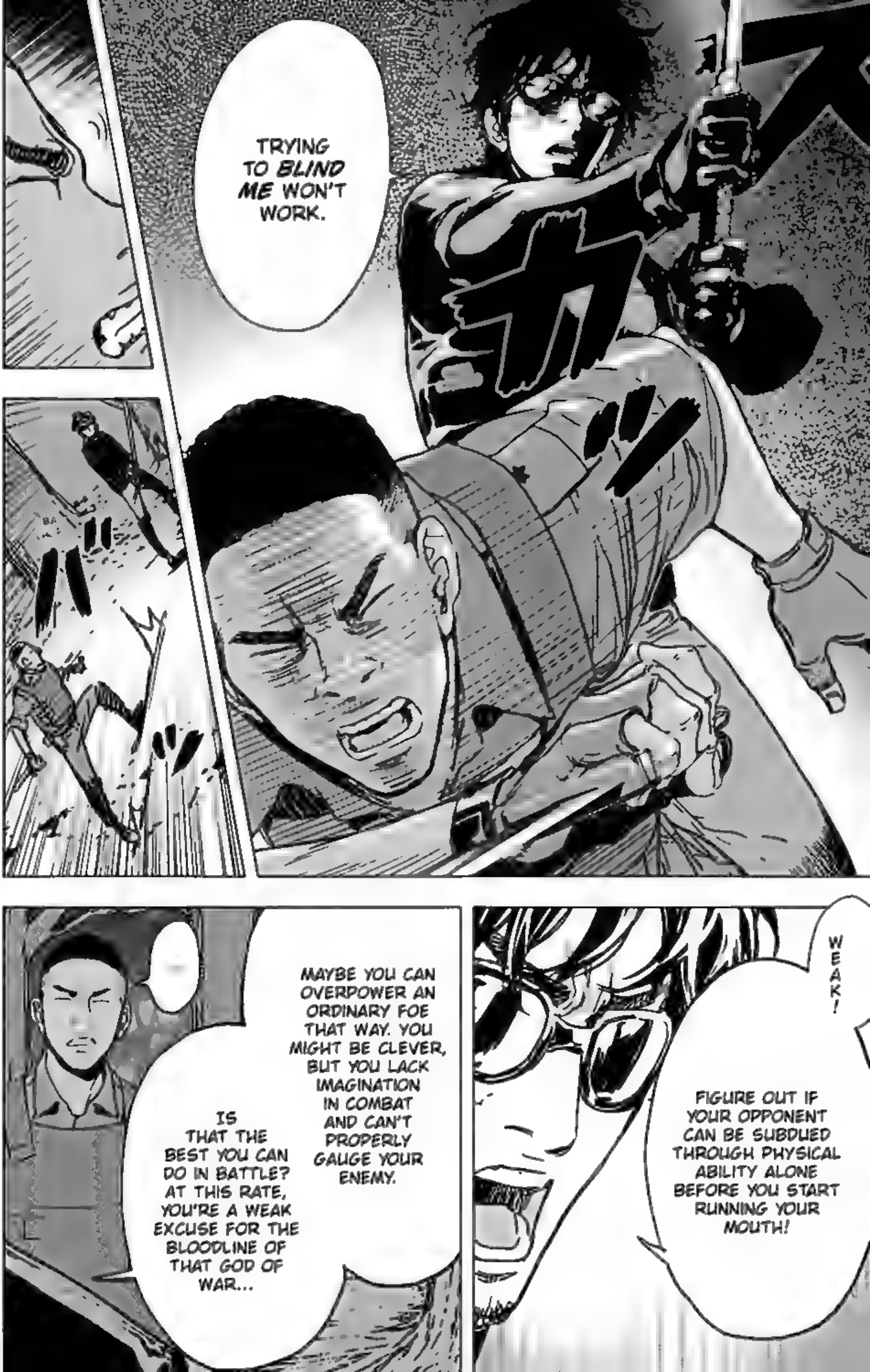
chapter 199

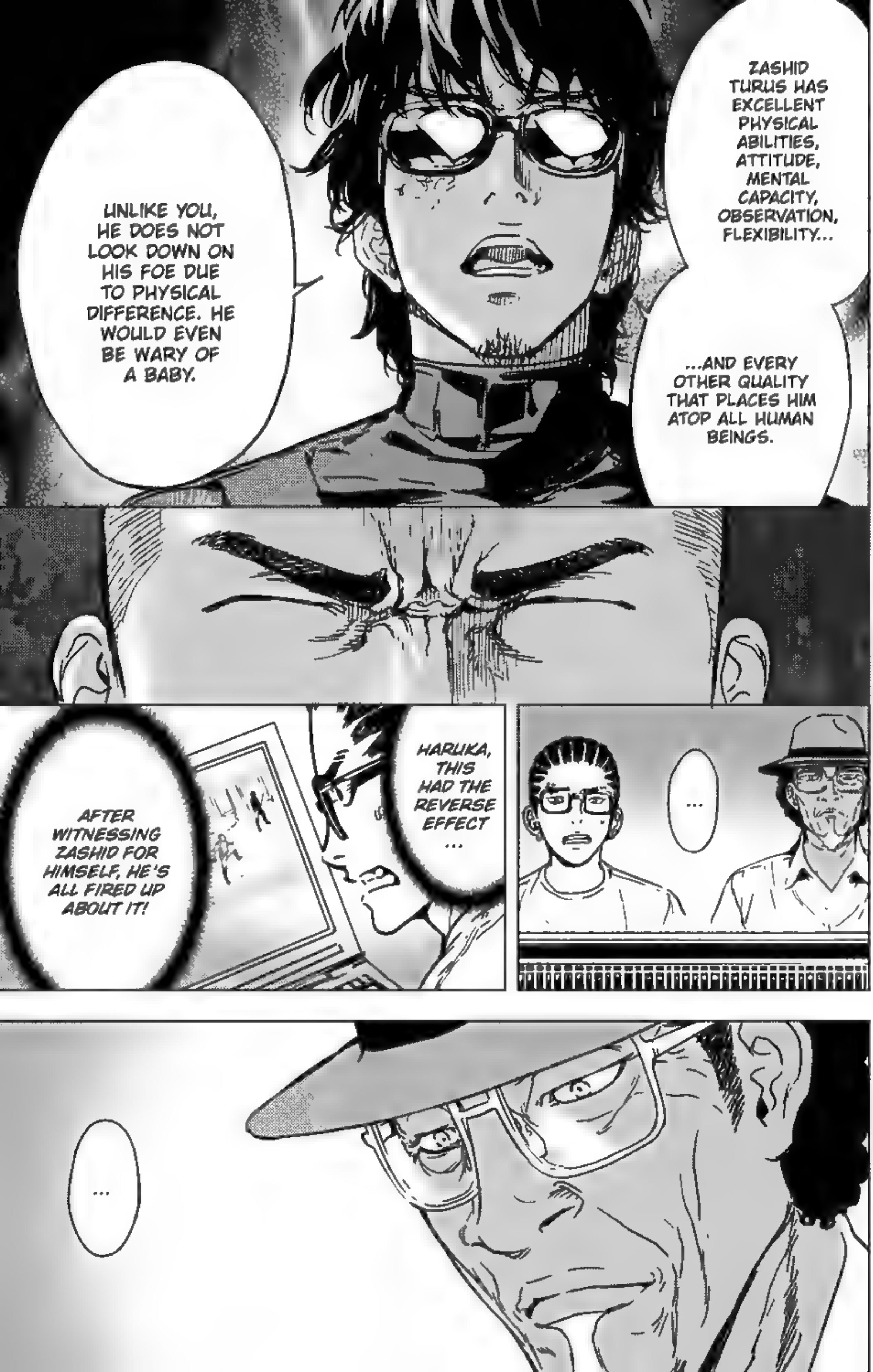

THIS IS JUST NONSENSE...
IF YOU THINK YOU CAN CATCH ME...
!?
chapter 199

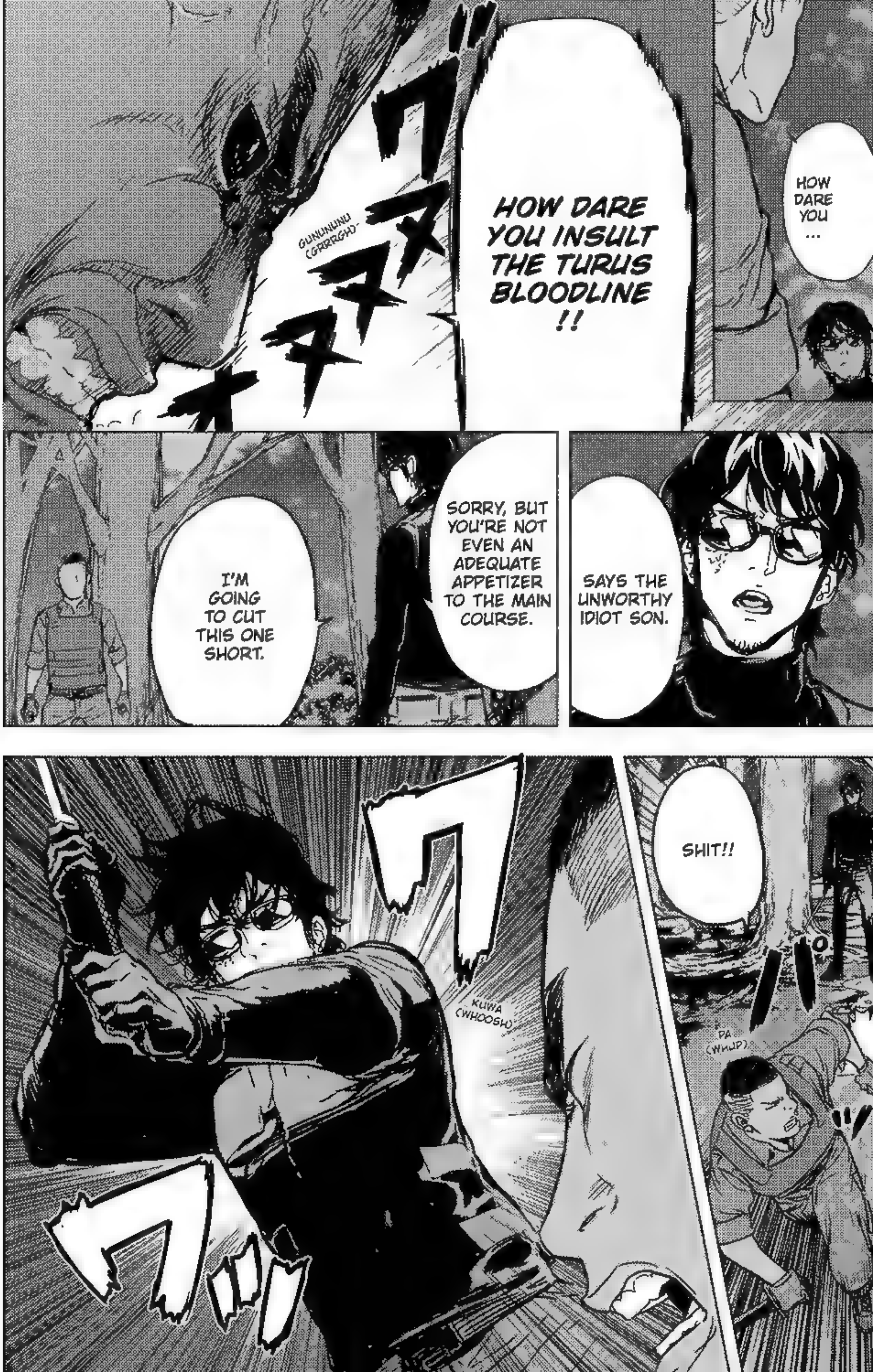

BISHI.
(BSHIMM)

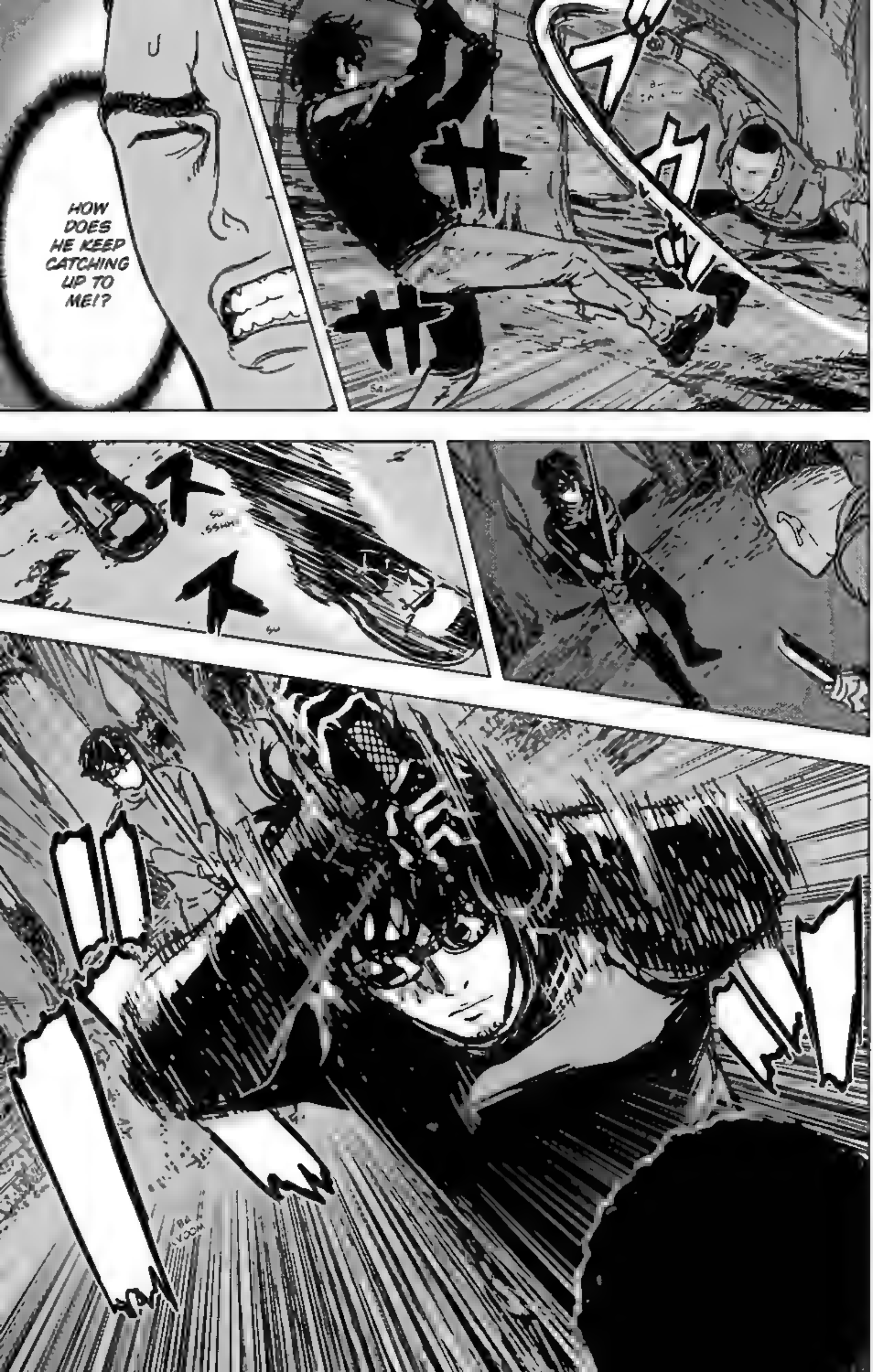

ZAN (ZMM)
KORORON (ROLL)
BA (VMM)
IMPOSSIBLE!
...WHAT'S WRONG?
IT WAS A COINCIDENCE! WE JUST HAPPENED TO GO AT THE SAME TIME...

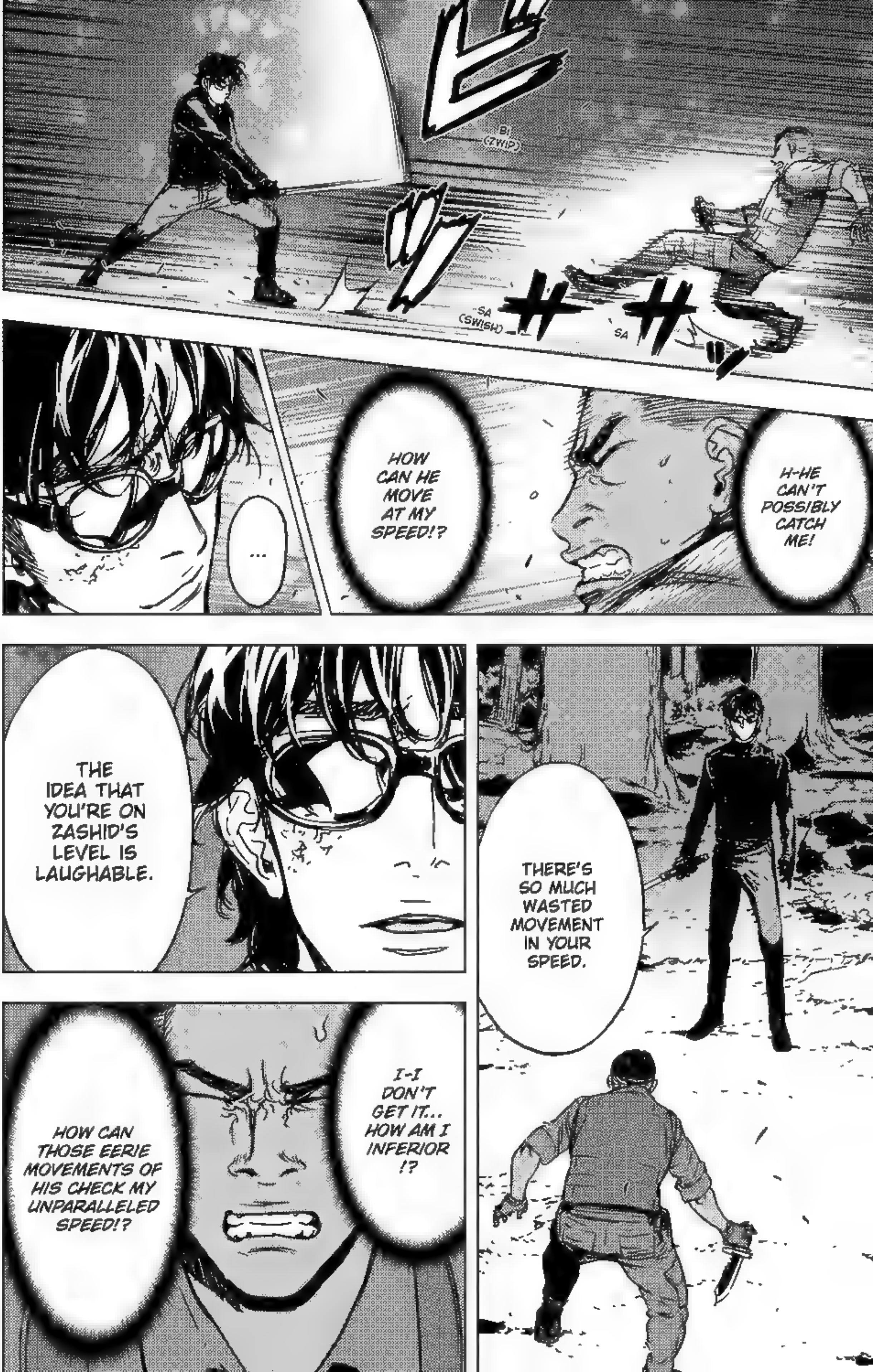

SHA
シャッ
SHA
シャッ
SHA
SHA
ザッ
SA
SWISH
ザッ
SA
ザッ
SA
SA
ザッ
BA

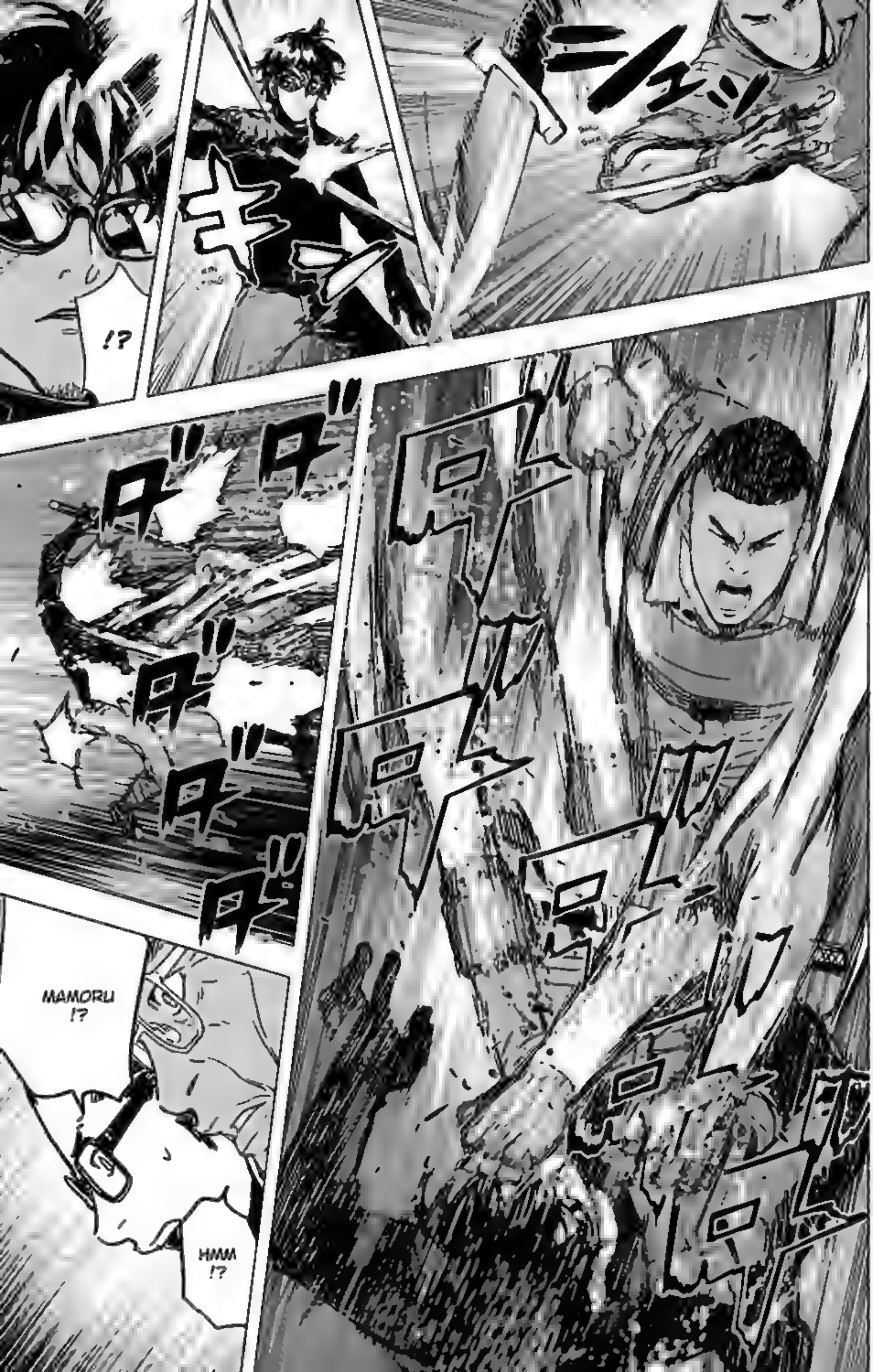

TRYING TO *BLIND ME* WON'T WORK.
WEAK!
FIGURE OUT IF YOUR OPPONENT CAN BE SUBDUED THROUGH PHYSICAL ABILITY ALONE BEFORE YOU START RUNNING YOUR *MOUTH!*
MAYBE YOU CAN OVERPOWER AN ORDINARY FOE THAT WAY. YOU MIGHT BE CLEVER, BUT YOU LACK IMAGINATION IN COMBAT AND CAN'T PROPERLY GAUGE YOUR ENEMY.
IS THAT THE BEST YOU CAN DO IN BATTLE? AT THIS RATE, YOU'RE A WEAK EXCUSE FOR THE BLOODLINE OF THAT *GOD OF* WAR...

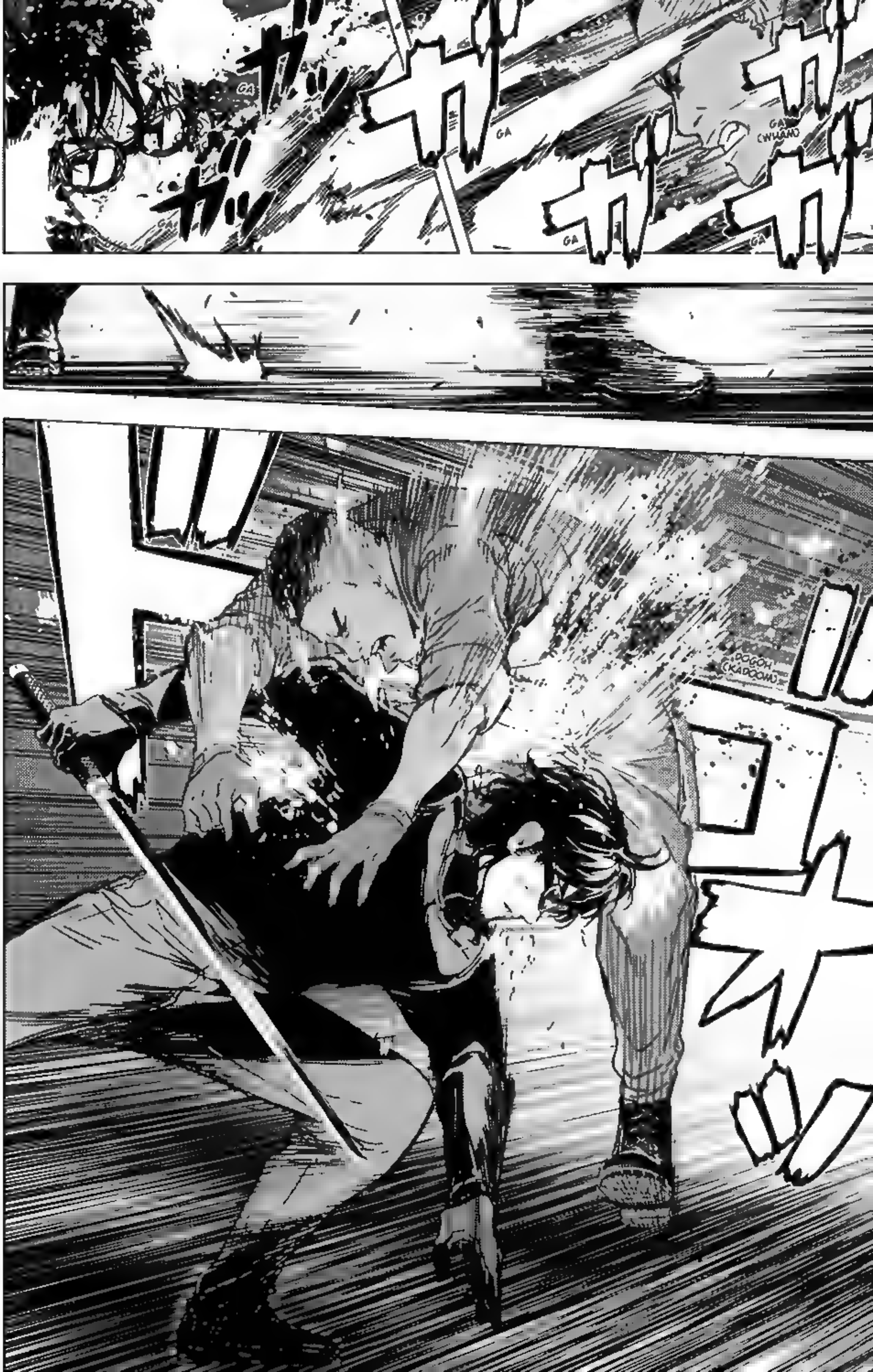

ZASHID TURUS HAS EXCELLENT PHYSICAL ABILITIES, ATTITUDE, MENTAL CAPACITY, OBSERVATION, FLEXIBILITY...
...AND EVERY OTHER QUALITY THAT PLACES HIM ATOP ALL HUMAN BEINGS.
UNLIKE YOU, HE DOES NOT LOOK DOWN ON HIS FOE DUE TO PHYSICAL DIFFERENCE. HE WOULD EVEN BE WARY OF A BABY.
...
HARUKA, THIS HAD THE REVERSE EFFECT ...
AFTER WITNESSING ZASHID FOR HIMSELF, HE'S ALL FIRED UP ABOUT IT!
...

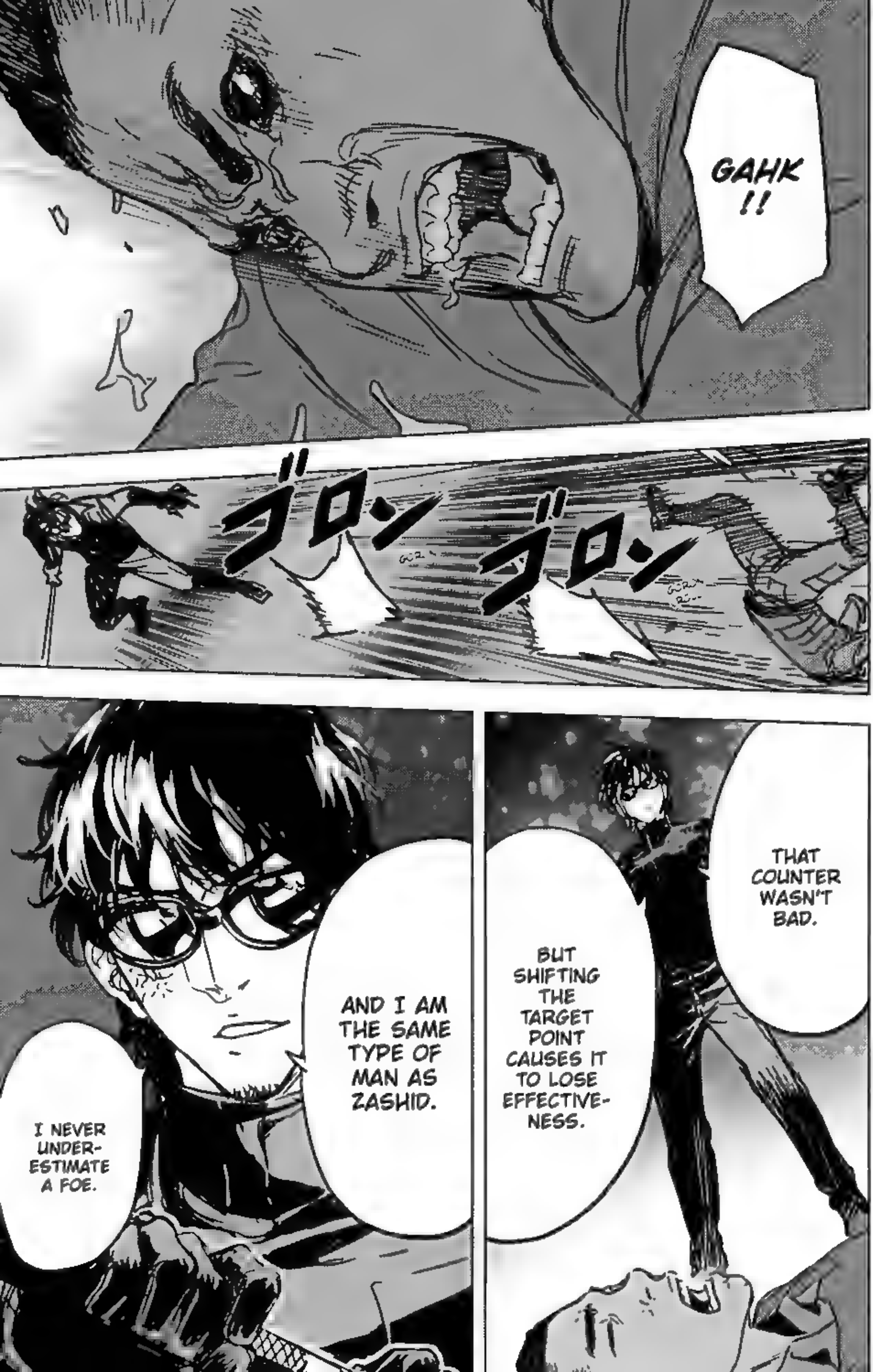

HOW DARE YOU ...
HOW DARE YOU INSULT THE TURUS BLOODLINE !!
GUNUNUNU (GRRRGH)
SAYS THE UNWORTHY IDIOT SON.
SORRY, BUT YOU'RE NOT EVEN AN ADEQUATE APPETIZER TO THE MAIN COURSE.
I'M GOING TO CUT THIS ONE SHORT.
SHIT!!
PA (WHUP)
KUWA (WHOOSH)

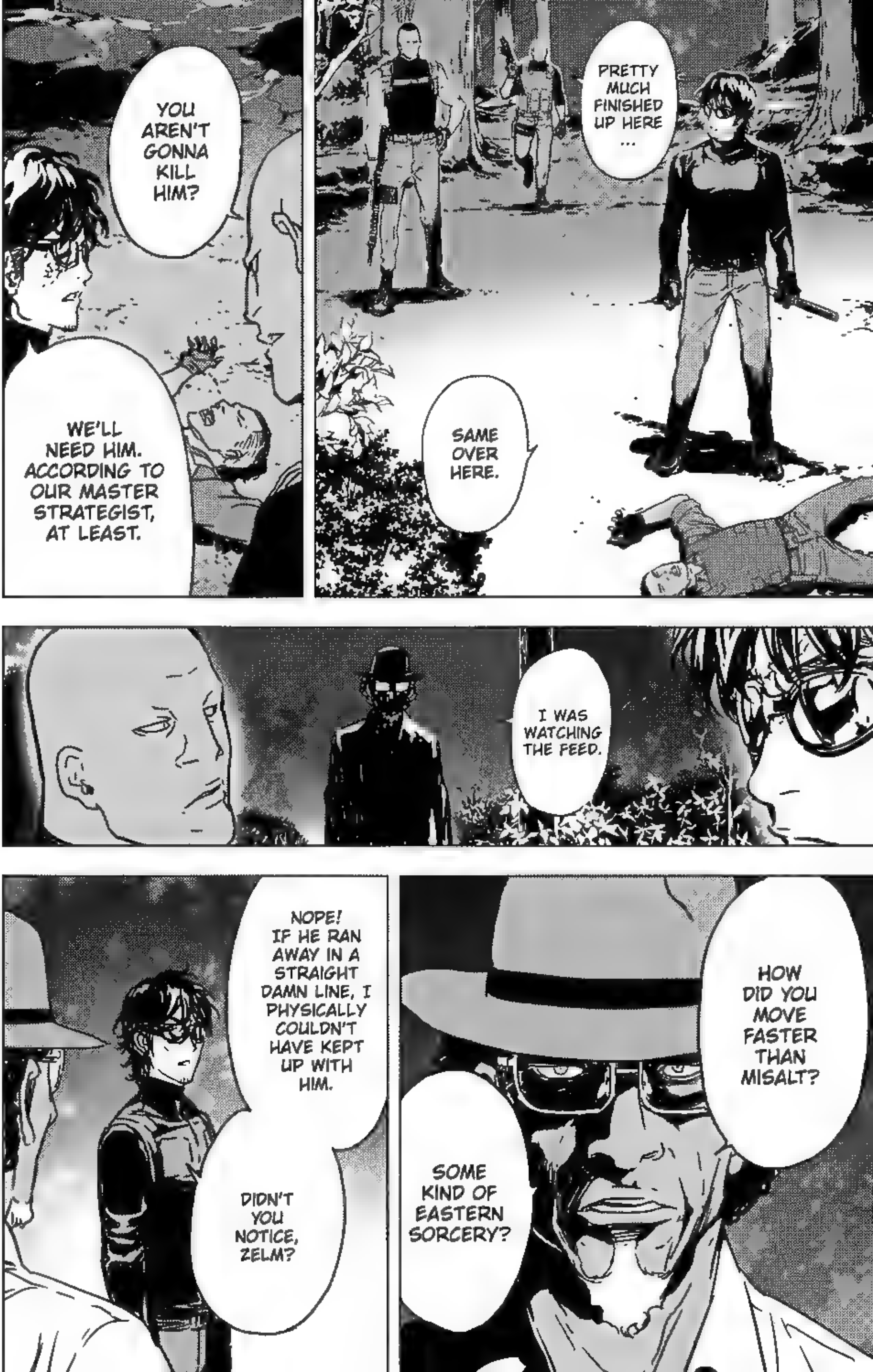

HOW DOES HE KEEP CATCHING UP TO ME!?
SU SSHH
BA VOOM

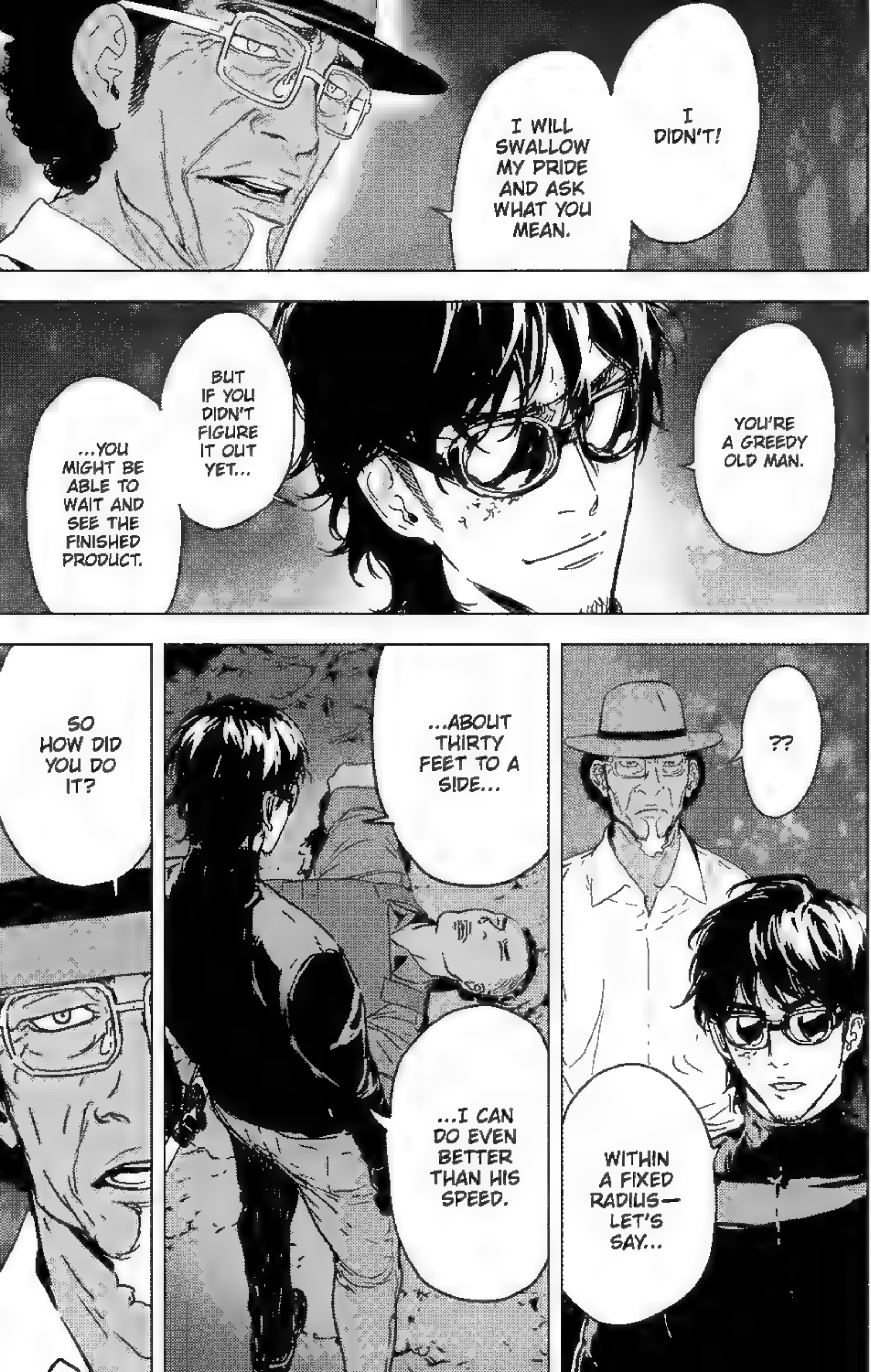

BI (ZWIP)
SA (SWISH)
SA
H-HE CAN'T POSSIBLY CATCH ME!
HOW CAN HE MOVE AT MY SPEED!?
...
THERE'S SO MUCH WASTED MOVEMENT IN YOUR SPEED.
THE IDEA THAT YOU'RE ON ZASHID'S LEVEL IS LAUGHABLE.
I-I DON'T GET IT... HOW AM I INFERIOR!?
HOW CAN THOSE EERIE MOVEMENTS OF HIS CHECK MY UNPARALLELED SPEED!?

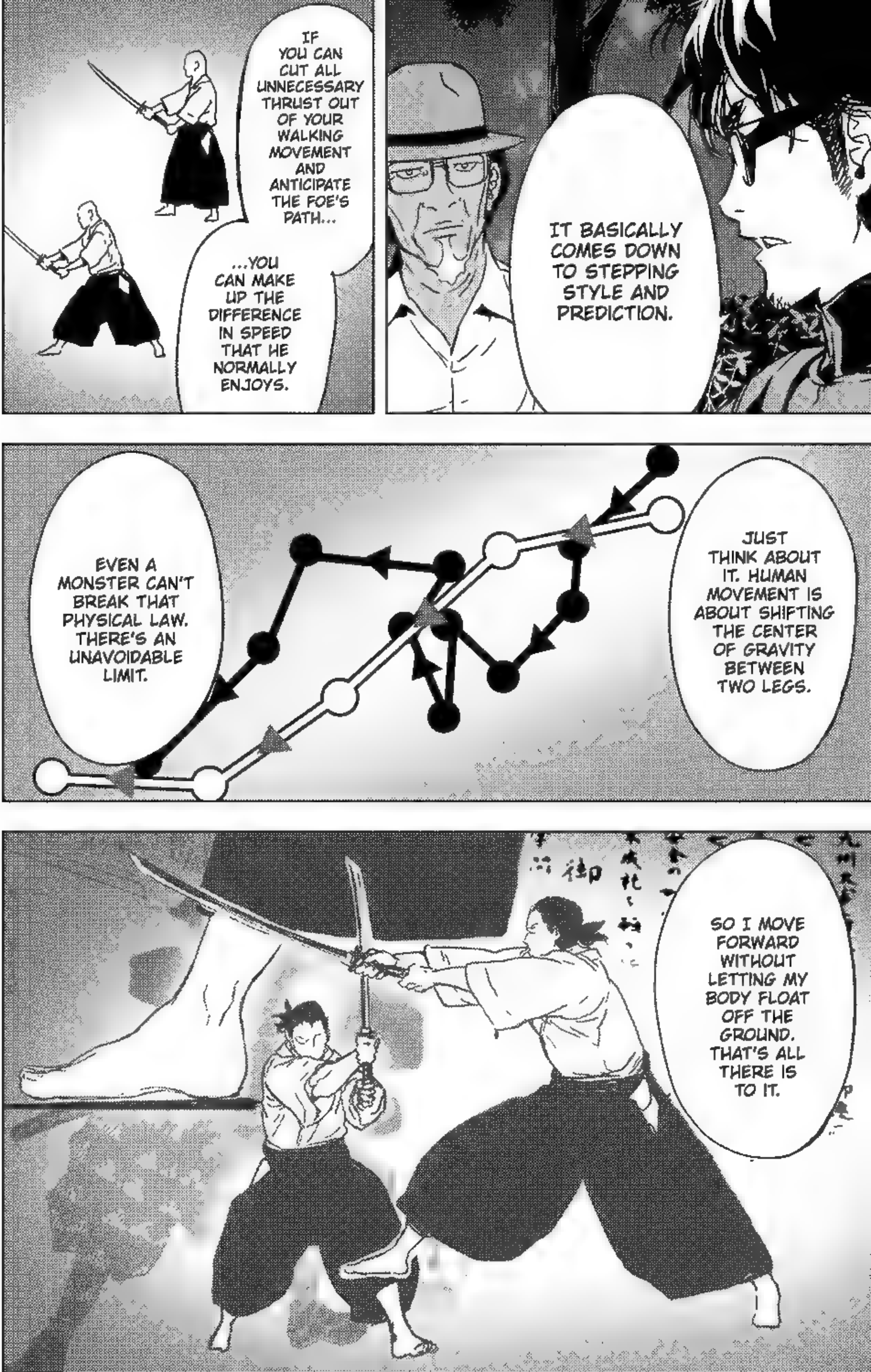

ニュッ
キッ
!?
ダダダダダ
ドドドドド
MAMORU !?
HMM !?

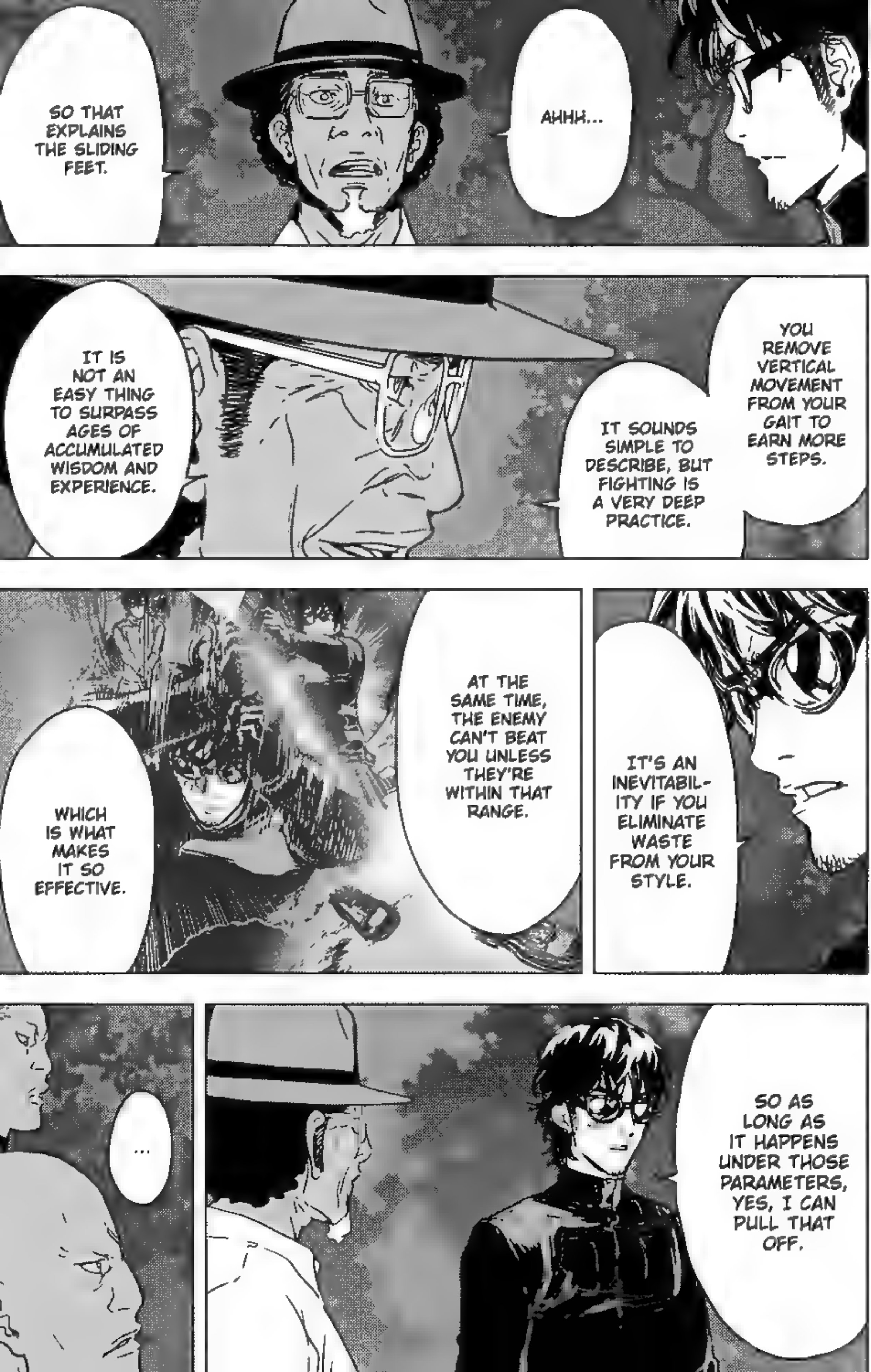

GA
(WHAM)
GA
GA
GA
GA
GA
DOGOH
(KADOOM)

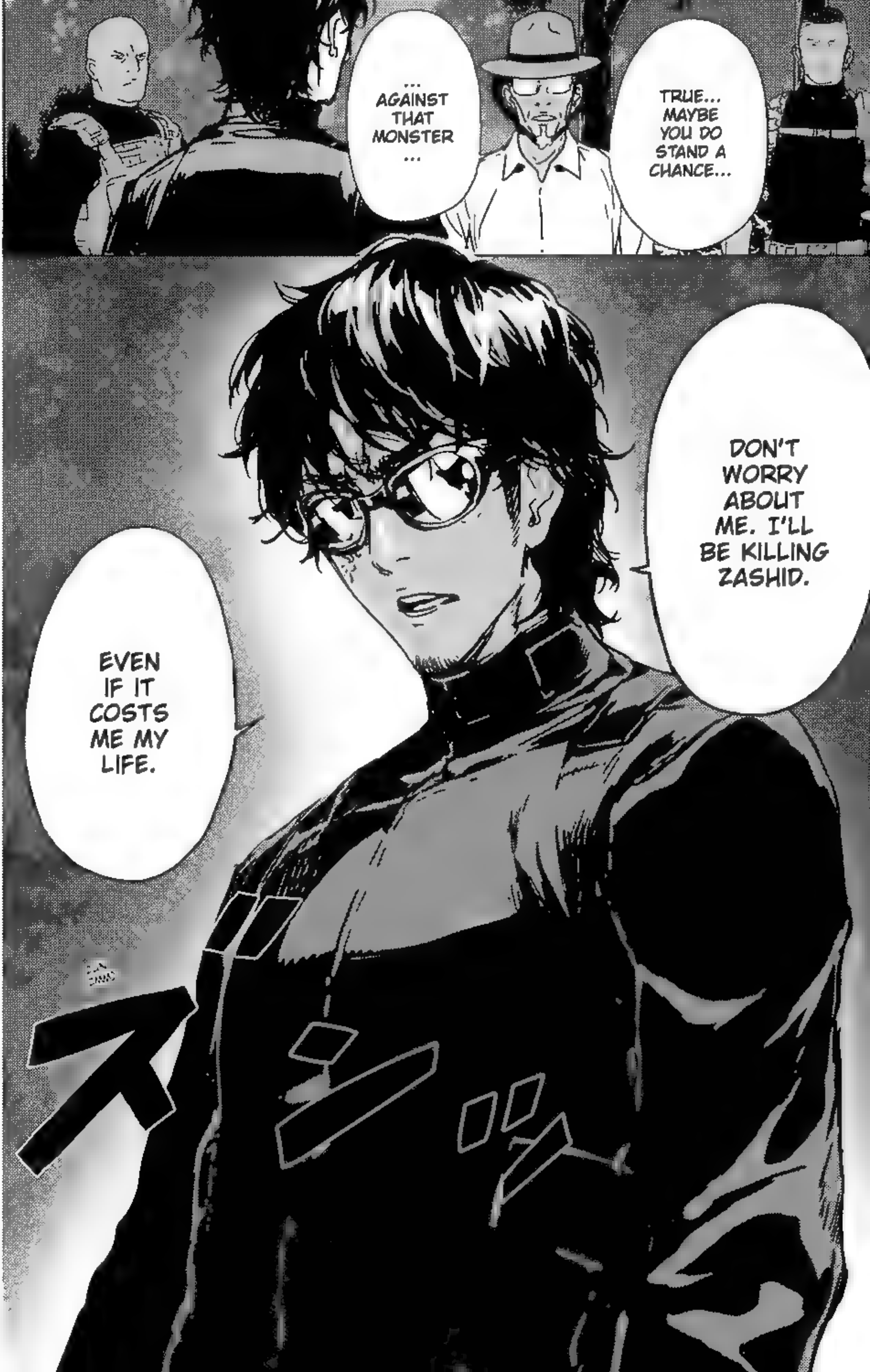

GAHK!!
ゴロン
ゴロン
THAT COUNTER WASN'T BAD.
BUT SHIFTING THE TARGET POINT CAUSES IT TO LOSE EFFECTIVENESS.
AND I AM THE SAME TYPE OF MAN AS ZASHID.
I NEVER UNDERESTIMATE A FOE.

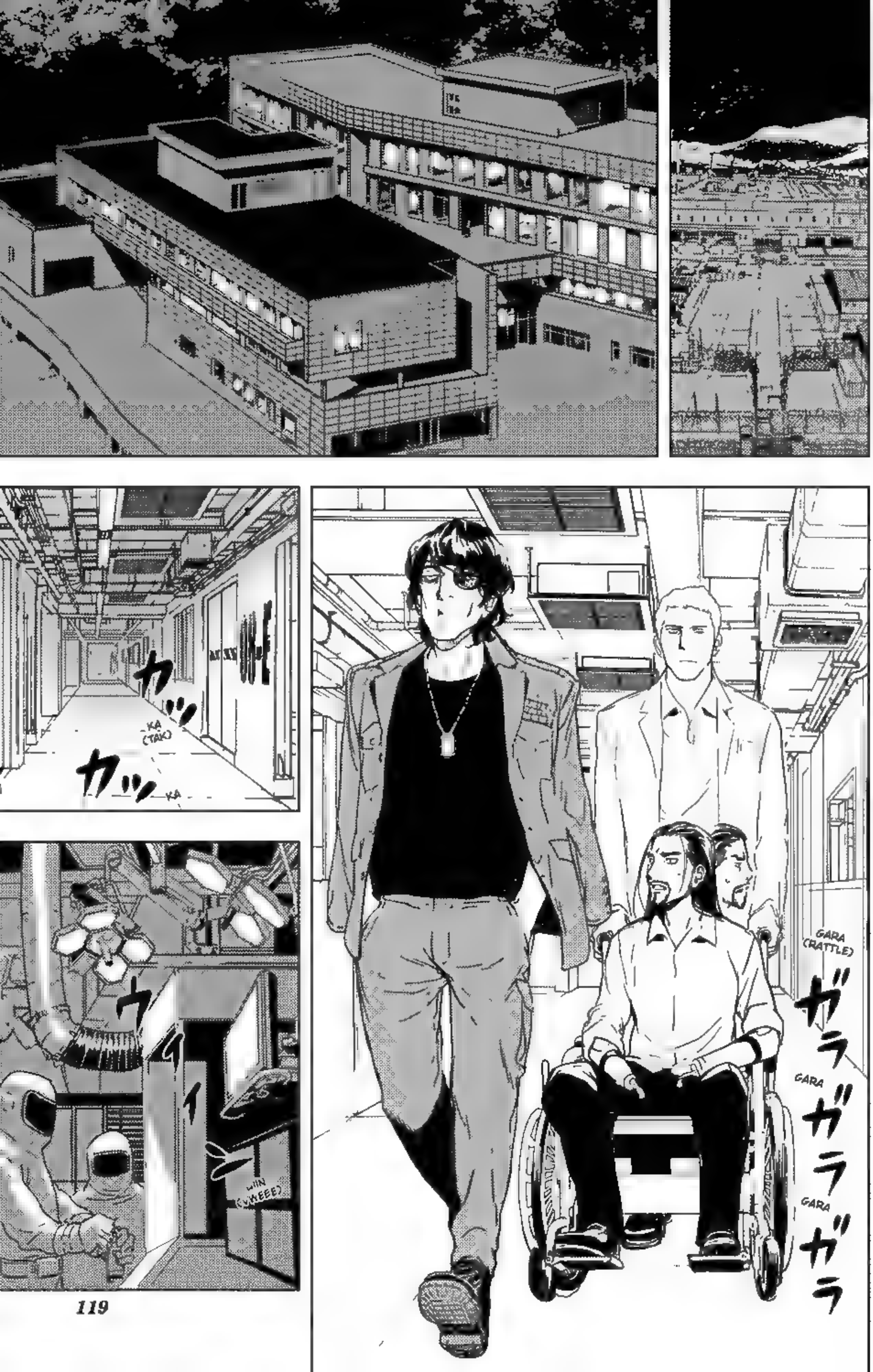

PRETTY MUCH FINISHED UP HERE ...
SAME OVER HERE.
YOU AREN'T GONNA KILL HIM?
WE'LL NEED HIM. ACCORDING TO OUR MASTER STRATEGIST, AT LEAST.
I WAS WATCHING THE FEED.
HOW DID YOU MOVE FASTER THAN MISALT?
SOME KIND OF EASTERN SORCERY?
NOPE! IF HE RAN AWAY IN A STRAIGHT DAMN LINE, I PHYSICALLY COULDN'T HAVE KEPT UP WITH HIM.
DIDN'T YOU NOTICE, ZELM?

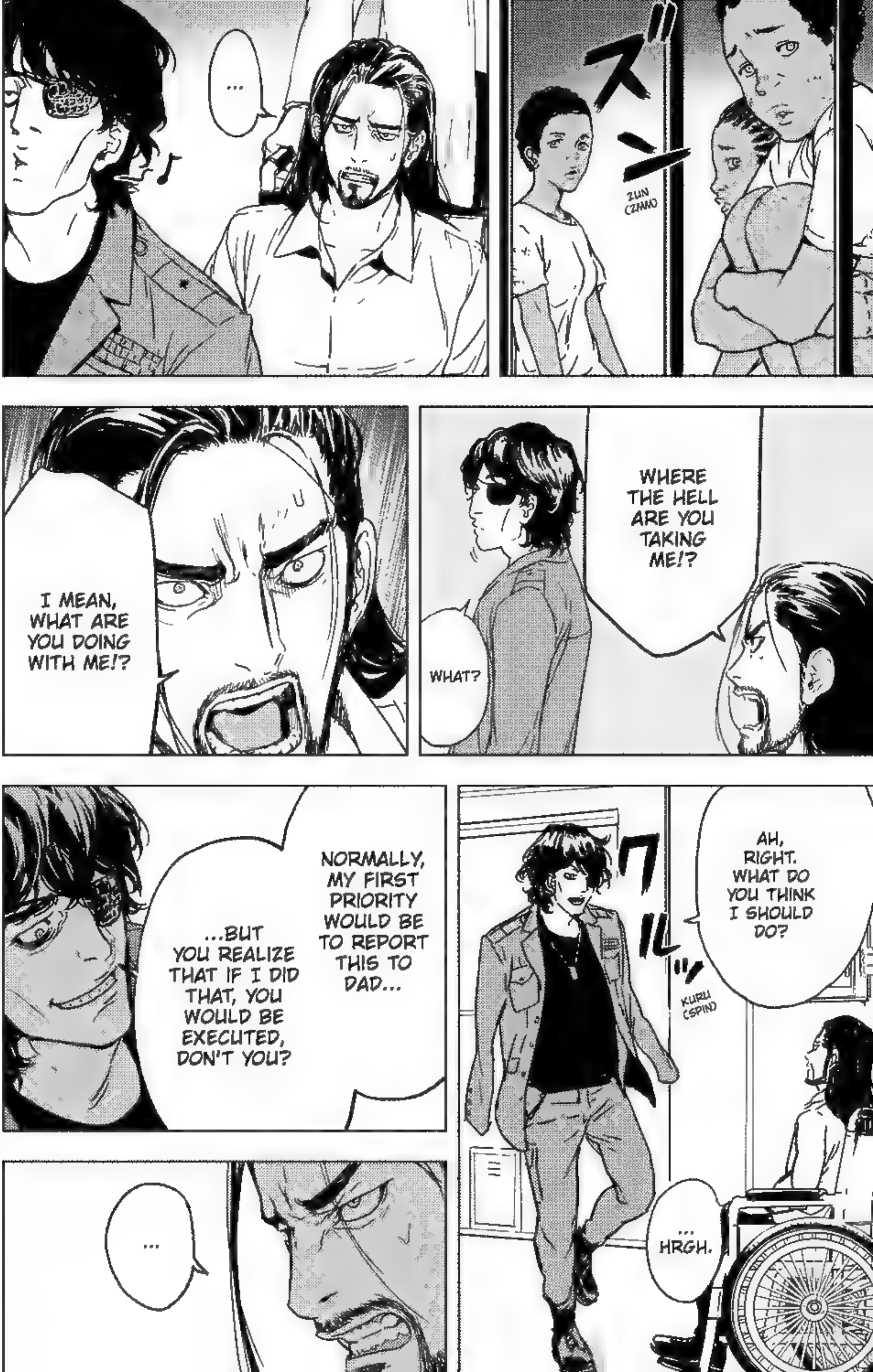

I DIDN'T!
I WILL SWALLOW MY PRIDE AND ASK WHAT YOU MEAN.
YOU'RE A GREEDY OLD MAN.
BUT IF YOU DIDN'T FIGURE IT OUT YET...
...YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO WAIT AND SEE THE FINISHED PRODUCT.
??
WITHIN A FIXED RADIUS—LET'S SAY...
...ABOUT THIRTY FEET TO A SIDE...
...I CAN DO EVEN BETTER THAN HIS SPEED.
SO HOW DID YOU DO IT?

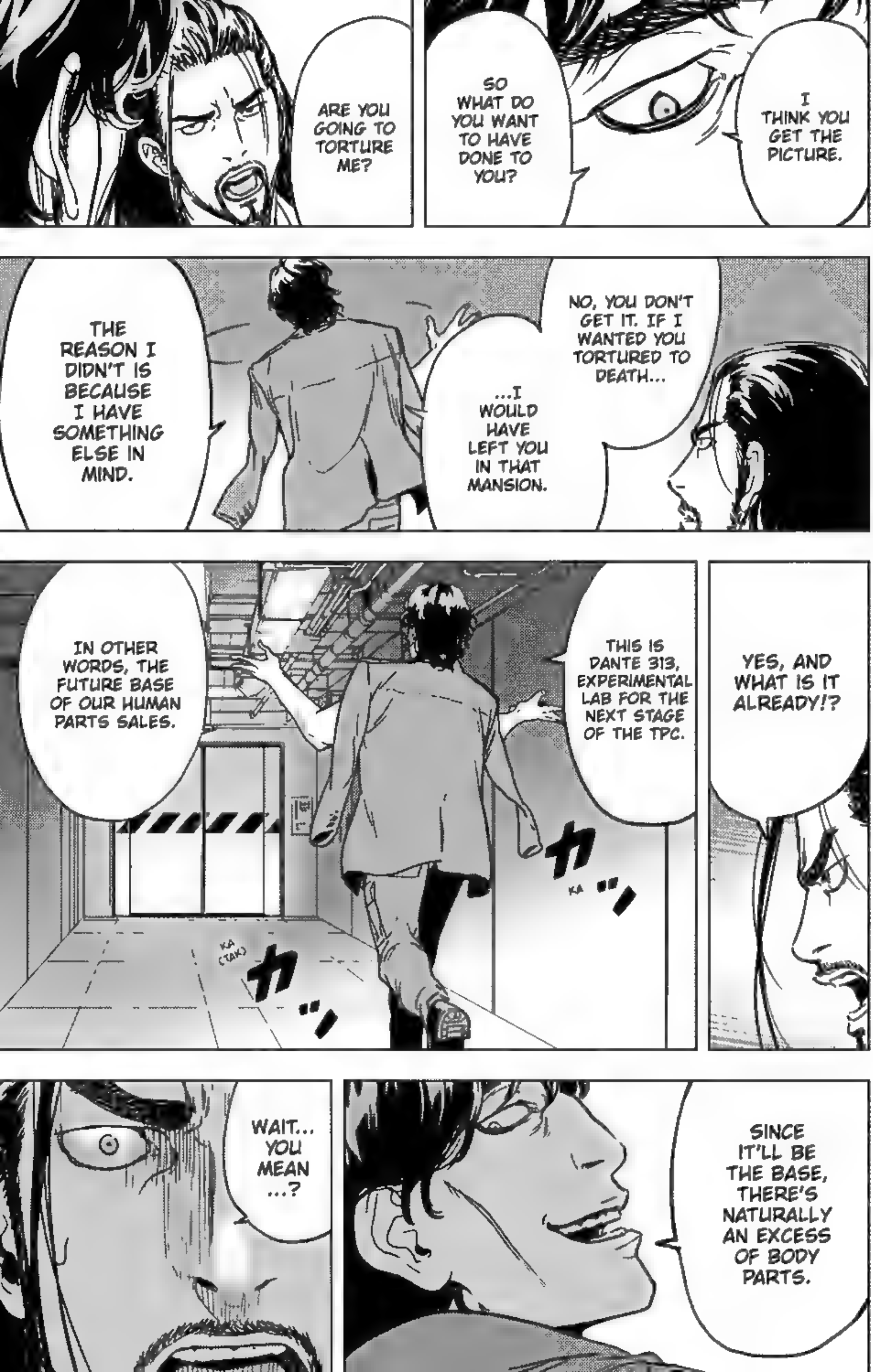

IT BASICALLY COMES DOWN TO STEPPING STYLE AND PREDICTION.
IF YOU CAN CUT ALL UNNECESSARY THRUST OUT OF YOUR WALKING MOVEMENT AND ANTICIPATE THE FOE'S PATH...
...YOU CAN MAKE UP THE DIFFERENCE IN SPEED THAT HE NORMALLY ENJOYS.
JUST THINK ABOUT IT. HUMAN MOVEMENT IS ABOUT SHIFTING THE CENTER OF GRAVITY BETWEEN TWO LEGS.
EVEN A MONSTER CAN'T BREAK THAT PHYSICAL LAW. THERE'S AN UNAVOIDABLE LIMIT.
SO I MOVE FORWARD WITHOUT LETTING MY BODY FLOAT OFF THE GROUND. THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT.

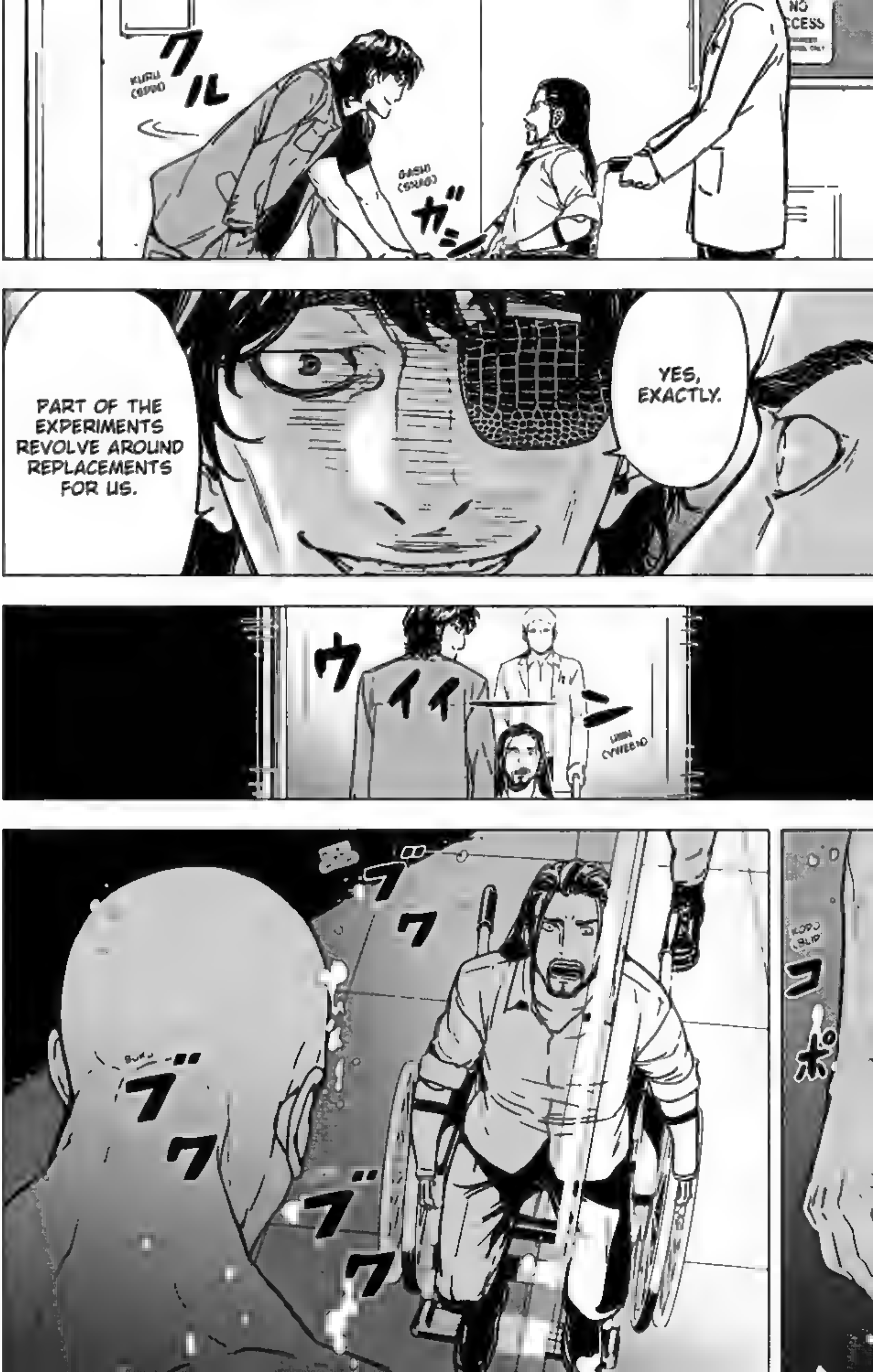

AHHH...
SO THAT EXPLAINS THE SLIDING FEET.
YOU REMOVE VERTICAL MOVEMENT FROM YOUR GAIT TO EARN MORE STEPS.
IT SOUNDS SIMPLE TO DESCRIBE, BUT FIGHTING IS A VERY DEEP PRACTICE.
IT IS NOT AN EASY THING TO SURPASS AGES OF ACCUMULATED WISDOM AND EXPERIENCE.
IT'S AN INEVITABILITY IF YOU ELIMINATE WASTE FROM YOUR STYLE.
AT THE SAME TIME, THE ENEMY CAN'T BEAT YOU UNLESS THEY'RE WITHIN THAT RANGE.
WHICH IS WHAT MAKES IT SO EFFECTIVE.
SO AS LONG AS IT HAPPENS UNDER THOSE PARAMETERS, YES, I CAN PULL THAT OFF.
...

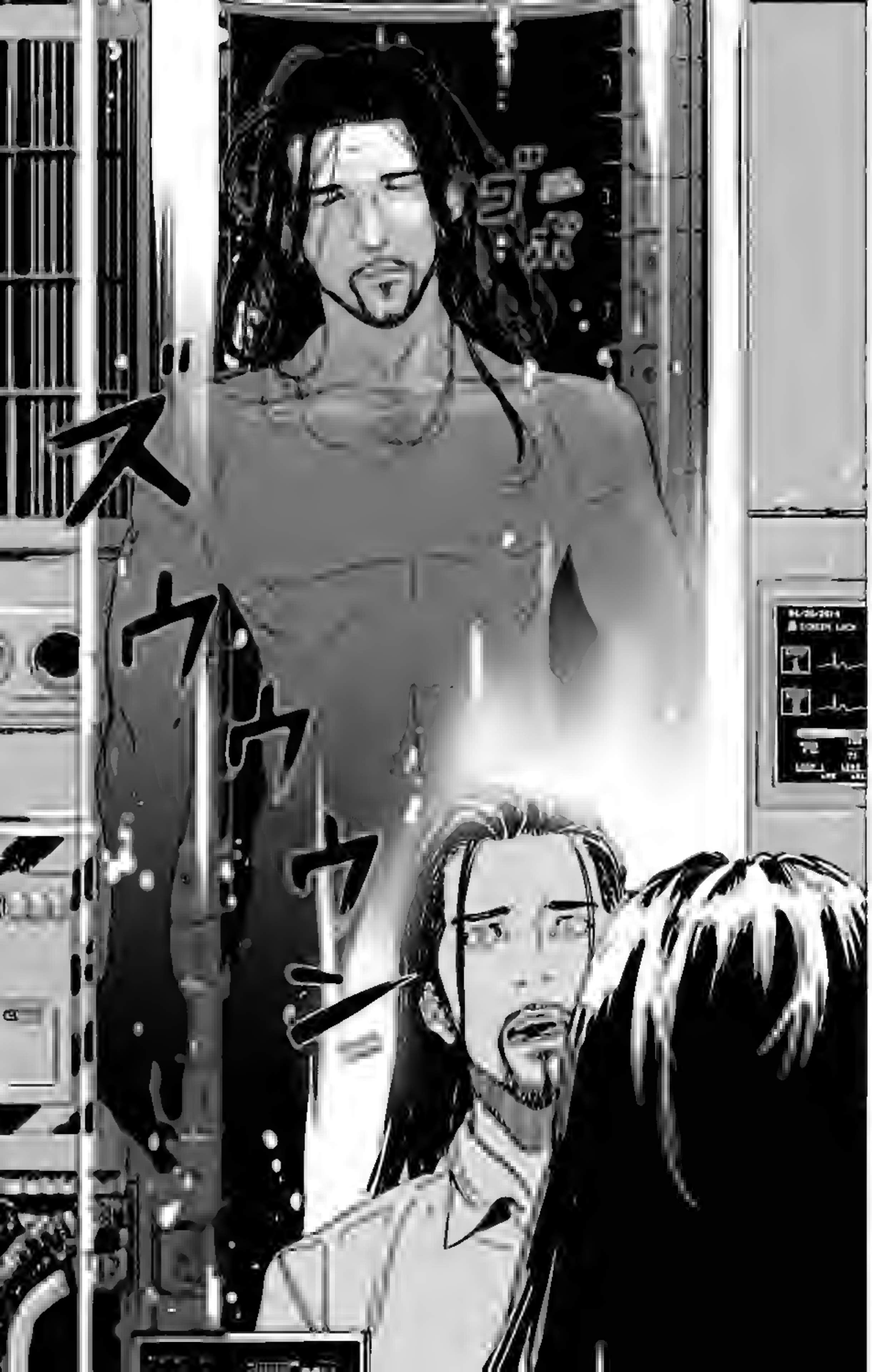

TRUE... MAYBE YOU DO STAND A CHANCE...
... AGAINST THAT MONSTER ...
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME. I'LL BE KILLING ZASHID.
EVEN IF IT COSTS ME MY LIFE.

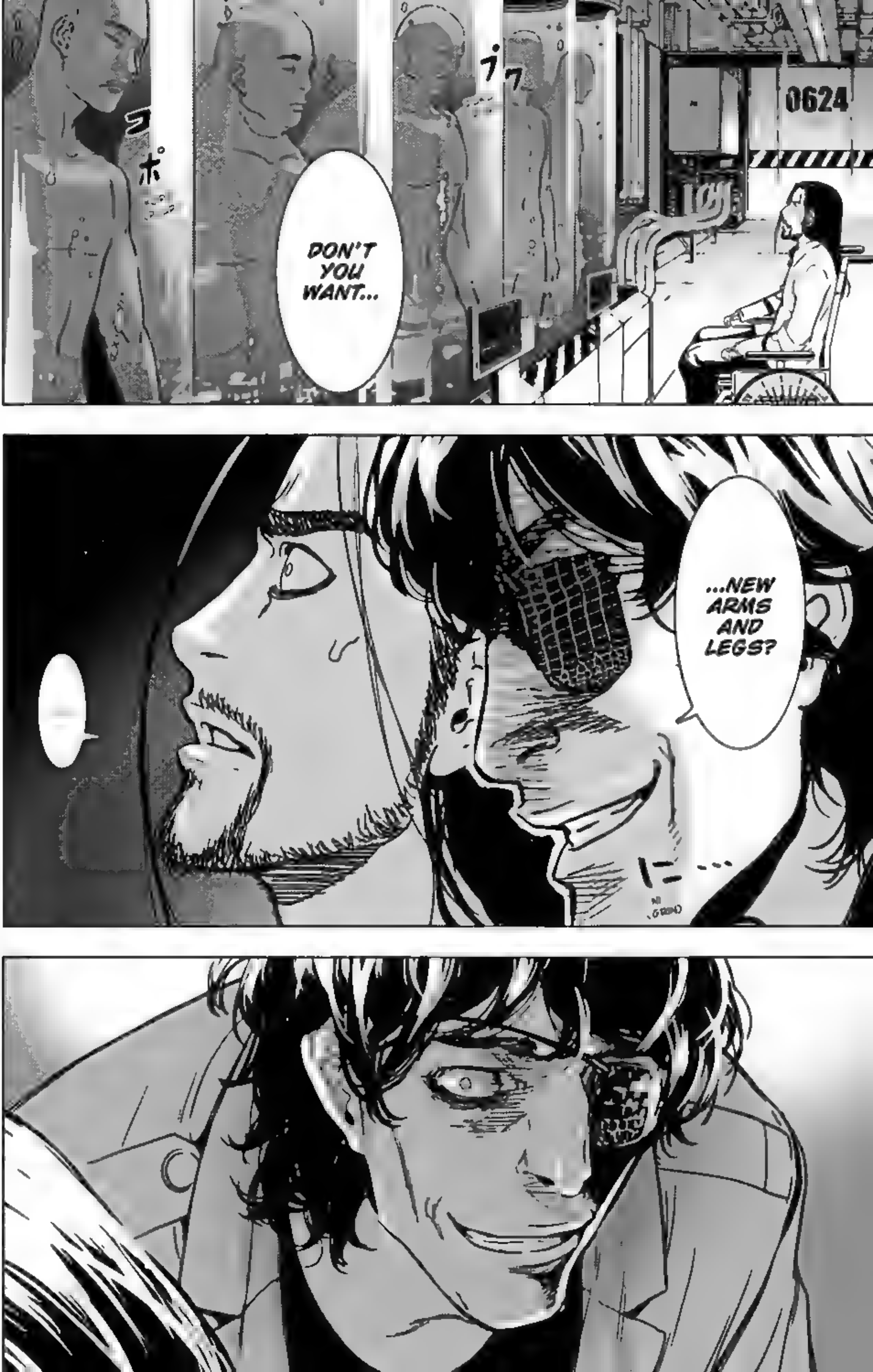

ガラ
GARA (RATTLE)
ガラ
GARA
ガラ
GARA
ガラ
カッ
KA (TAK)
カッ
KA
ウィィ
WIN (VWEEE)


ZUN (ZMM)
…
WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU TAKING ME!?
WHAT?
I MEAN, WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH ME!?
AH, RIGHT. WHAT DO YOU THINK I SHOULD DO?
KURU (SPIN)
NORMALLY, MY FIRST PRIORITY WOULD BE TO REPORT THIS TO DAD…
…BUT YOU REALIZE THAT IF I DID THAT, YOU WOULD BE EXECUTED, DON'T YOU?
…
… HRGH.


I THINK YOU GET THE PICTURE.
SO WHAT DO YOU WANT TO HAVE DONE TO YOU?
ARE YOU GOING TO TORTURE ME?
NO, YOU DON'T GET IT. IF I WANTED YOU TORTURED TO DEATH...
...I WOULD HAVE LEFT YOU IN THAT MANSION.
THE REASON I DIDN'T IS BECAUSE I HAVE SOMETHING ELSE IN MIND.
YES, AND WHAT IS IT ALREADY!?
THIS IS DANTE 313, EXPERIMENTAL LAB FOR THE NEXT STAGE OF THE TPC.
カッ
KA
IN OTHER WORDS, THE FUTURE BASE OF OUR HUMAN PARTS SALES.
カッ
KA (TAK)
SINCE IT'LL BE THE BASE, THERE'S NATURALLY AN EXCESS OF BODY PARTS.
WAIT... YOU MEAN ...?


NO ACCESS
クル
KURU (SPIN)
ガシ
GASHI (SNAG)
YES, EXACTLY.
PART OF THE EXPERIMENTS REVOLVE AROUND REPLACEMENTS FOR US.
ウイイーン
UIIN (WHEEN)
コポ
KOPO (BLIP)
ブク
ブクブク
BUKU
ブクブク


ゴボ
ズウウウーン


0624
ブク
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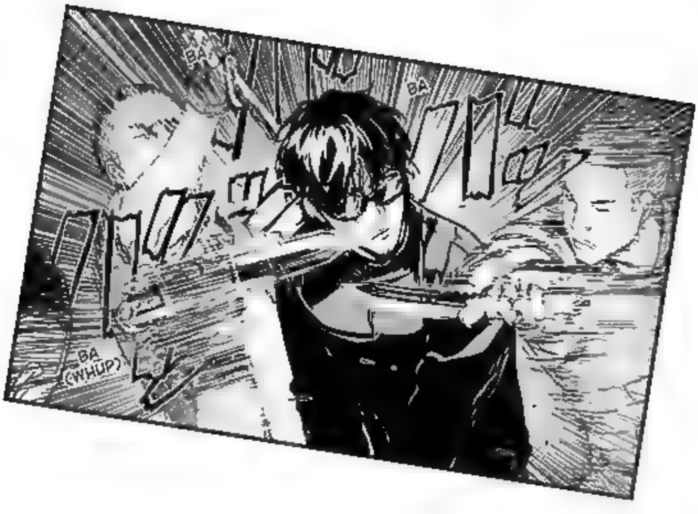
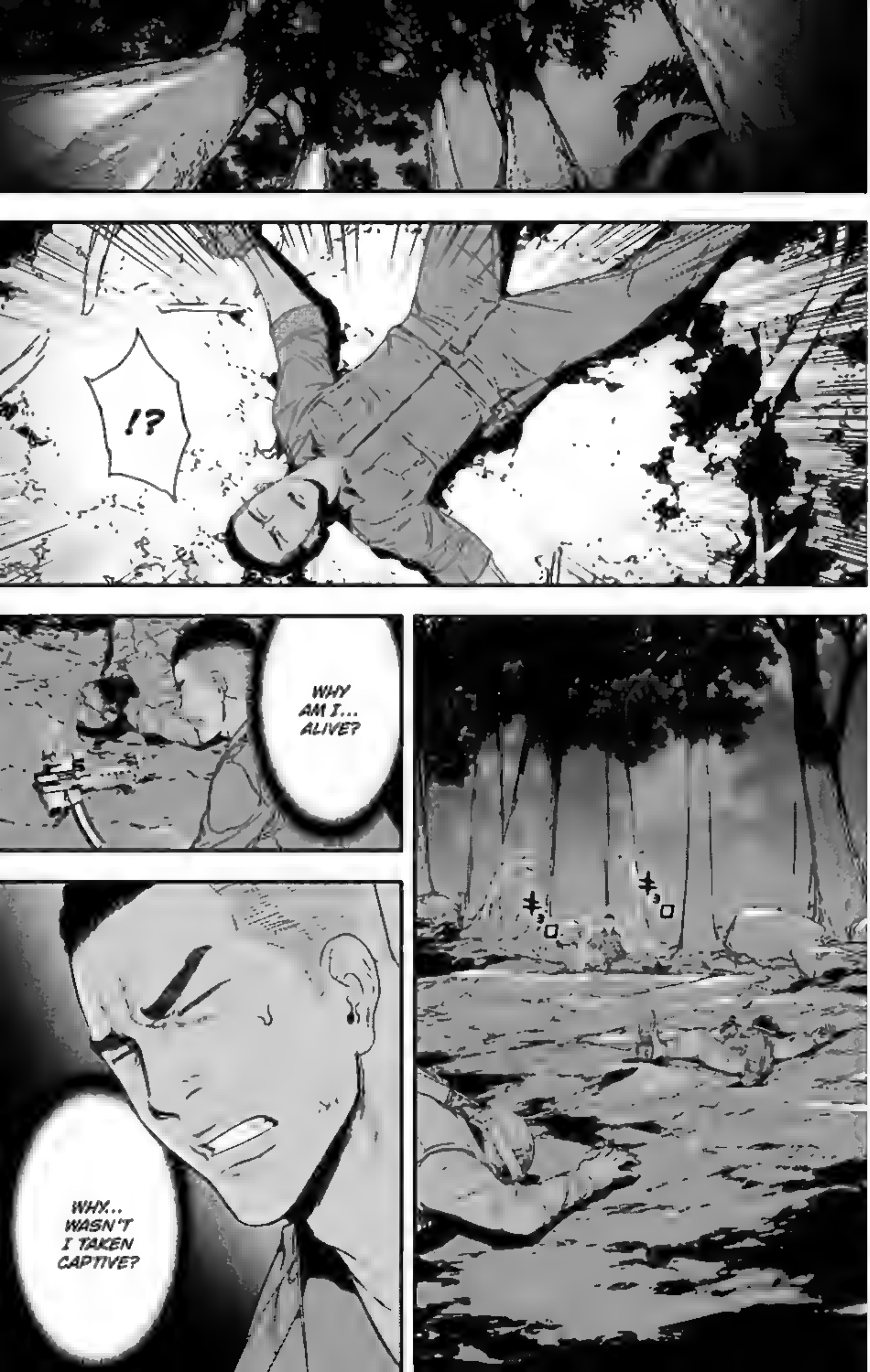
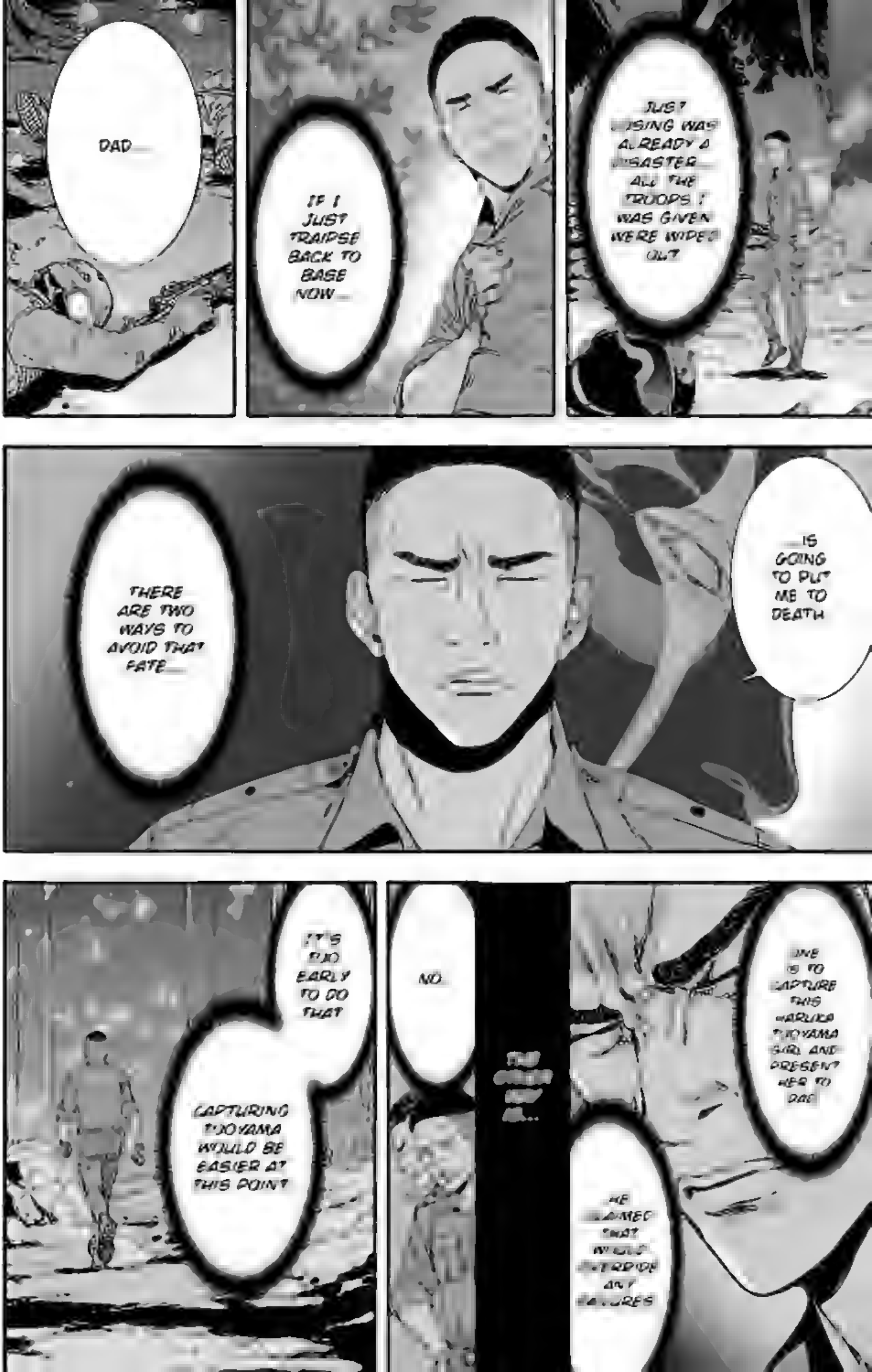
ポ
DON'T YOU WANT...
...NEW ARMS AND LEGS?
ニ…
NI (GRIN)

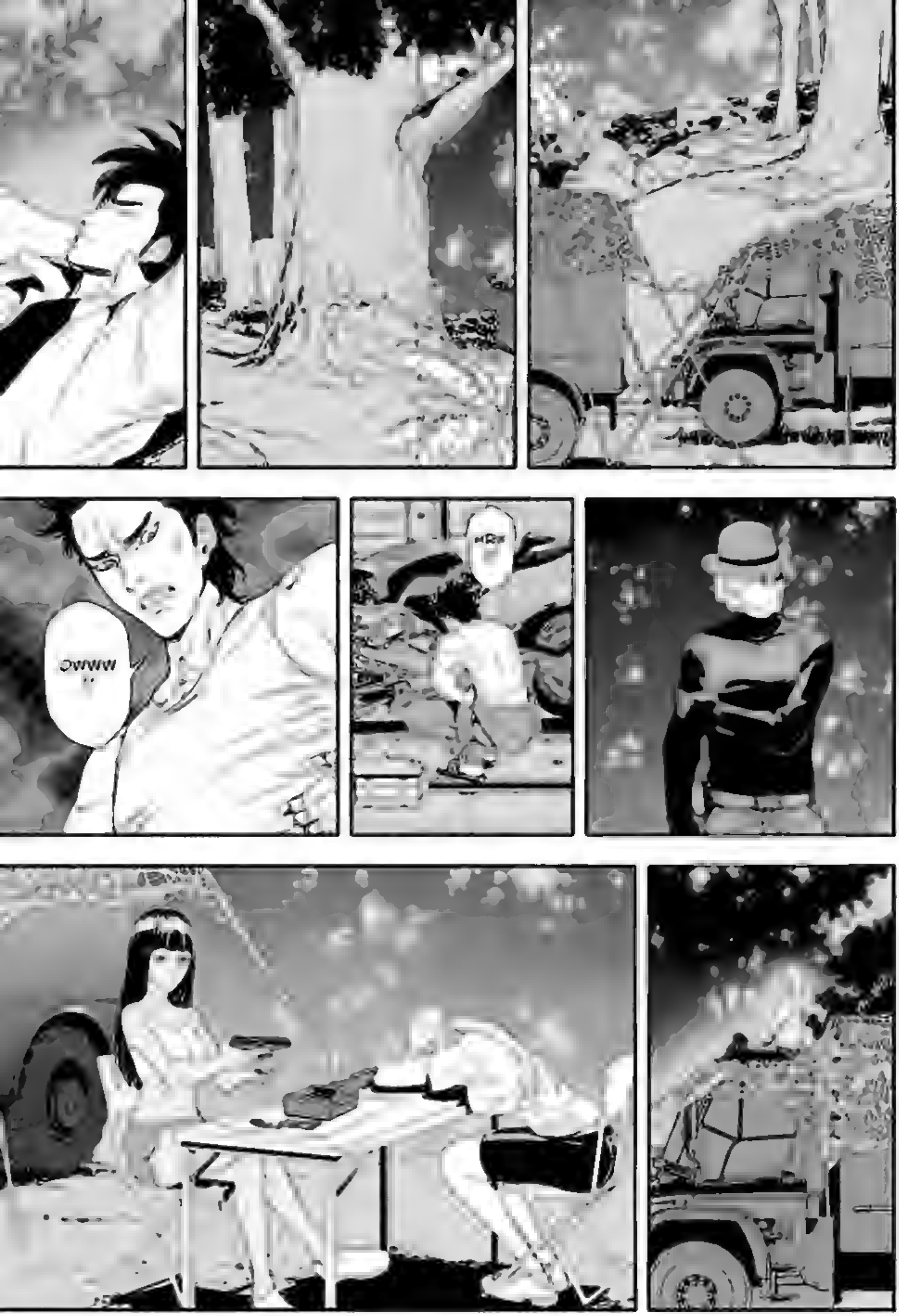

BA
BA
BA
(WHUP)

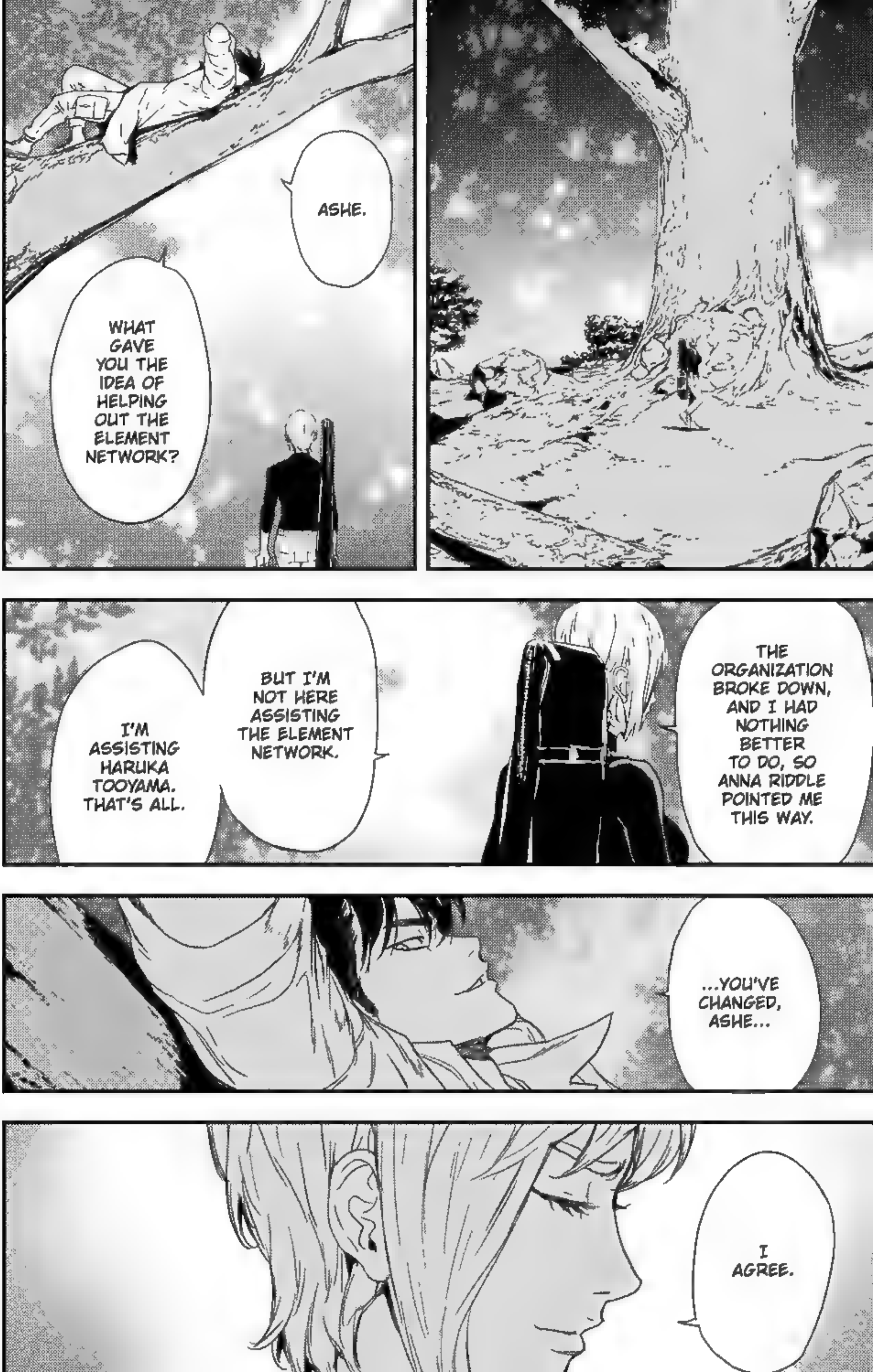
Until Death do us Part

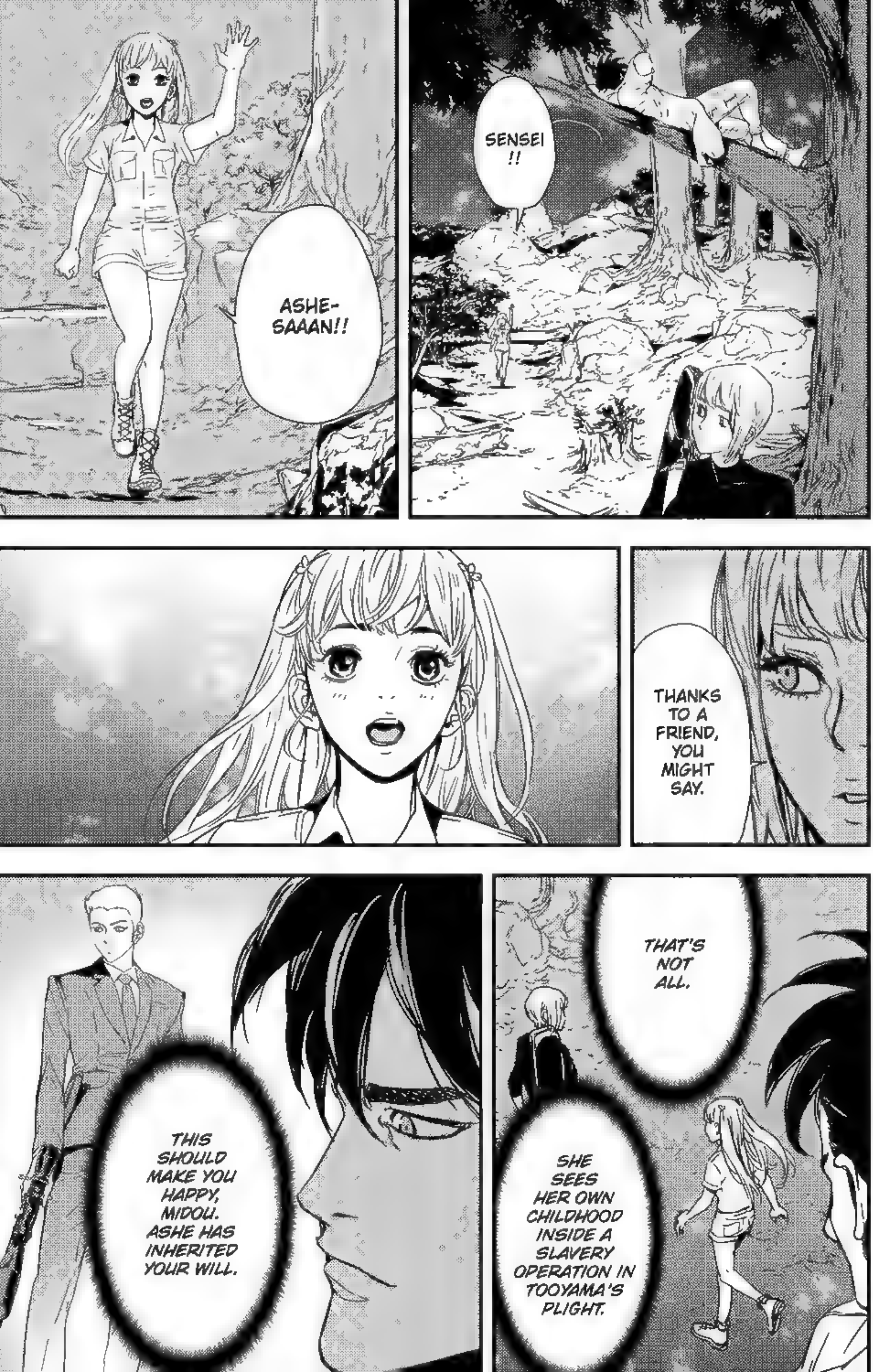

!?
キョロ
キョロ
WHY AM I... ALIVE?
WHY... WASN'T I TAKEN CAPTIVE?

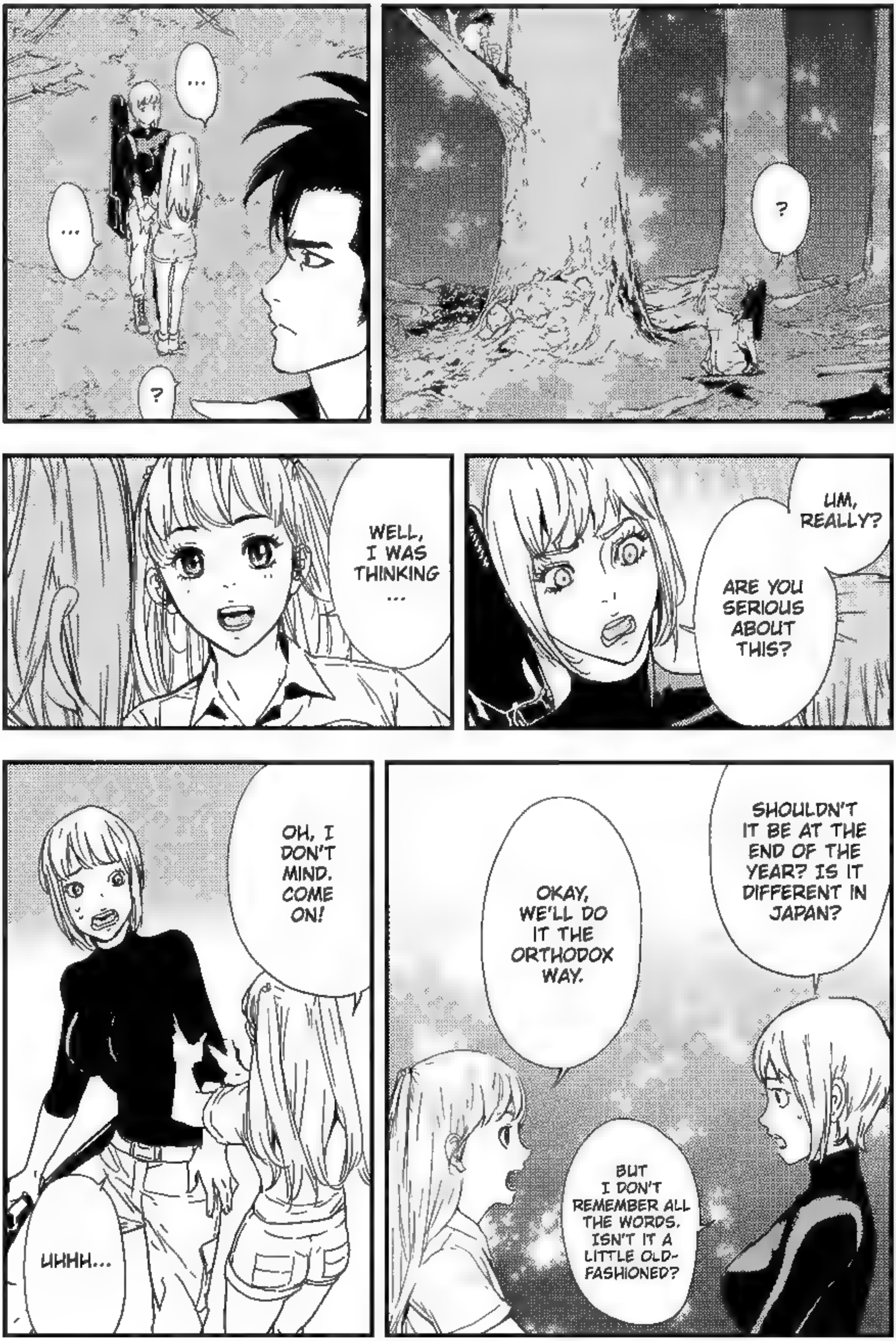

JUST LOSING WAS ALREADY A DISASTER... ALL THE TROOPS I WAS GIVEN WERE WIPED OUT
IF I JUST TRAIPSE BACK TO BASE NOW...
DAD...
...IS GOING TO PUT ME TO DEATH
THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO AVOID THAT FATE...
ONE IS TO CAPTURE THIS HARUKA TOOYAMA GIRL AND PRESENT HER TO DAD
HE CLAIMED THAT WOULD OVERRIDE ANY FAILURES
THE OTHER WAY IS...
NO...
IT'S TOO EARLY TO DO THAT
CAPTURING TOOYAMA WOULD BE EASIER AT THIS POINT

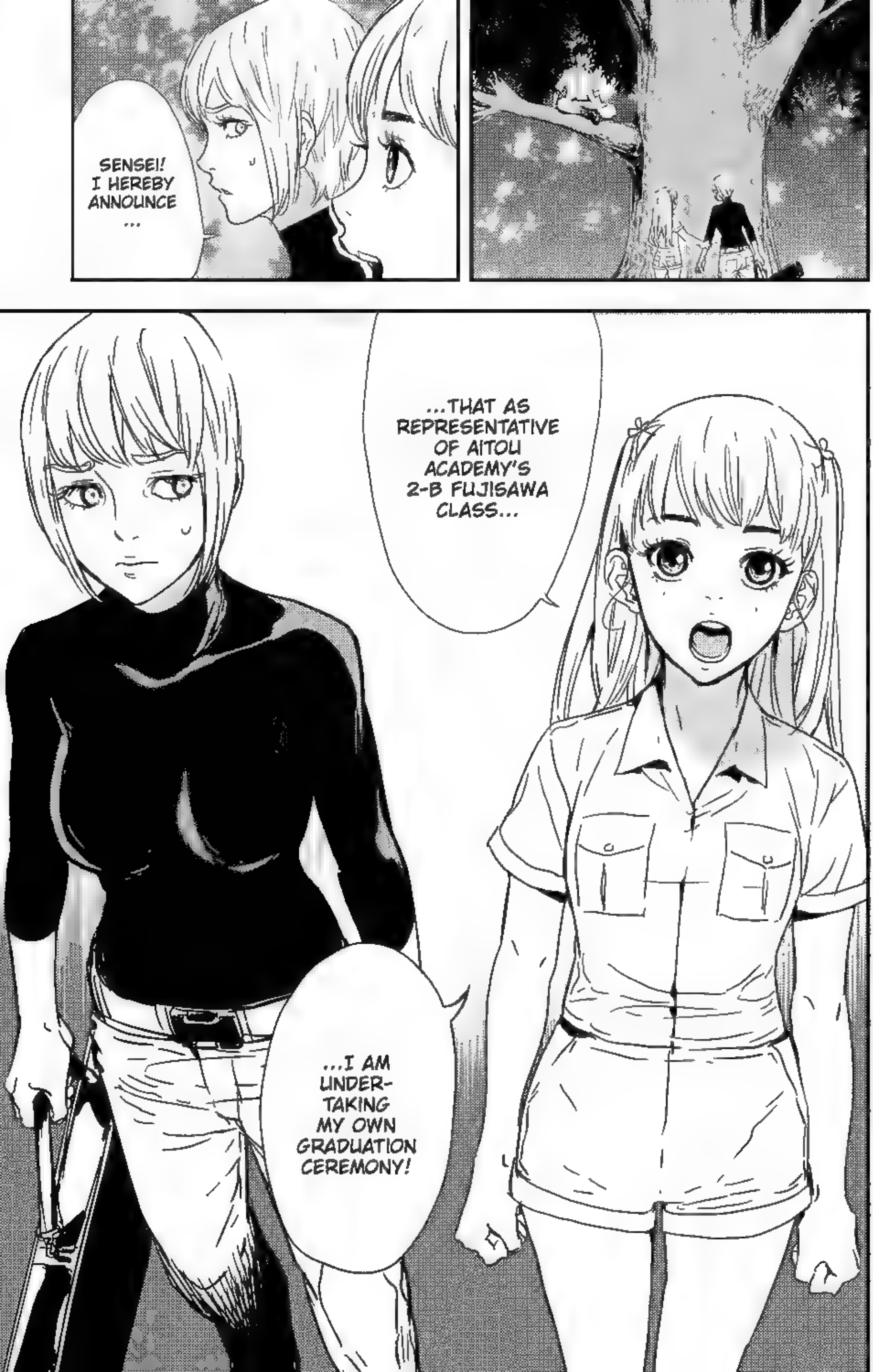
chapter 200

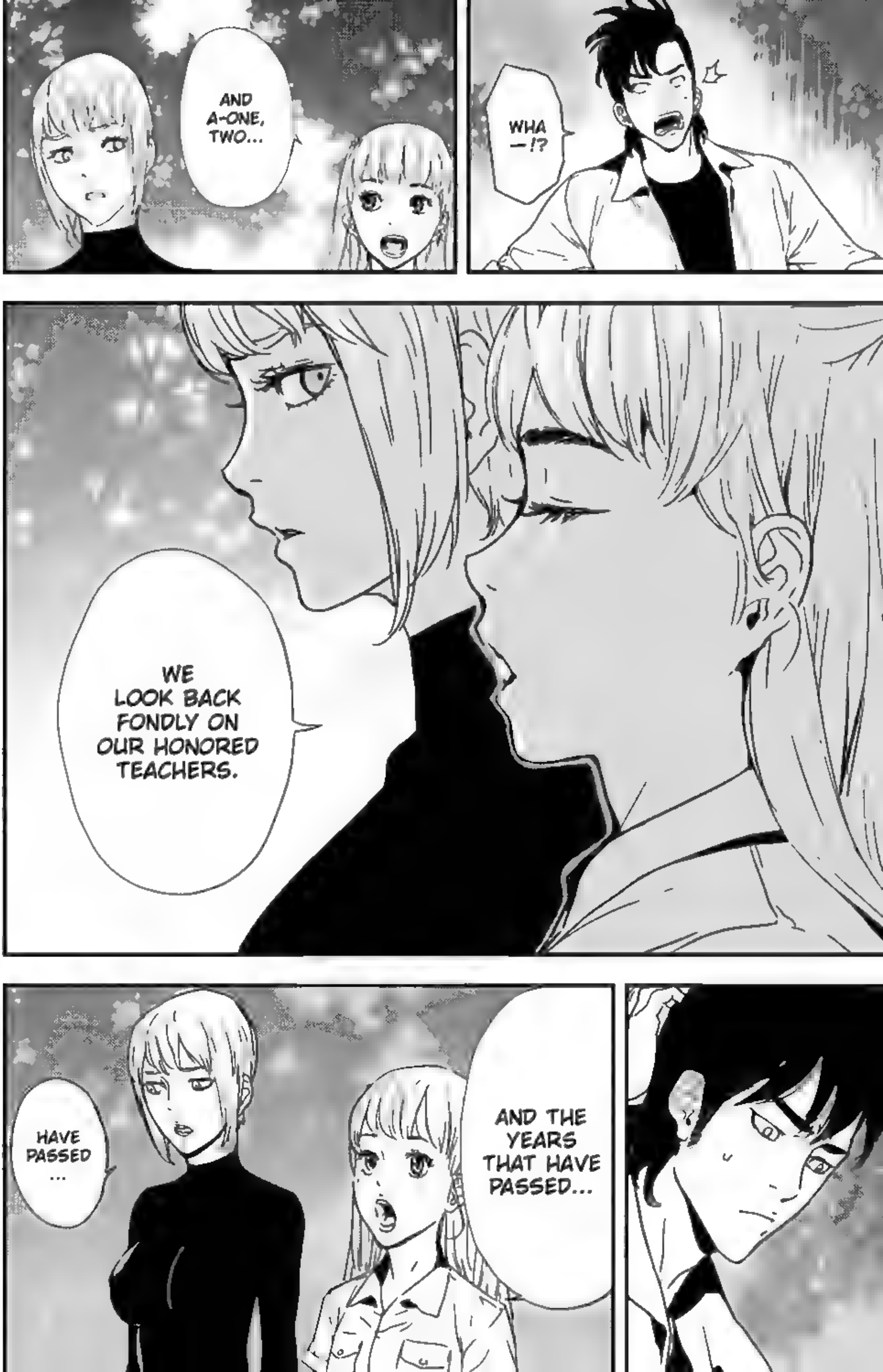


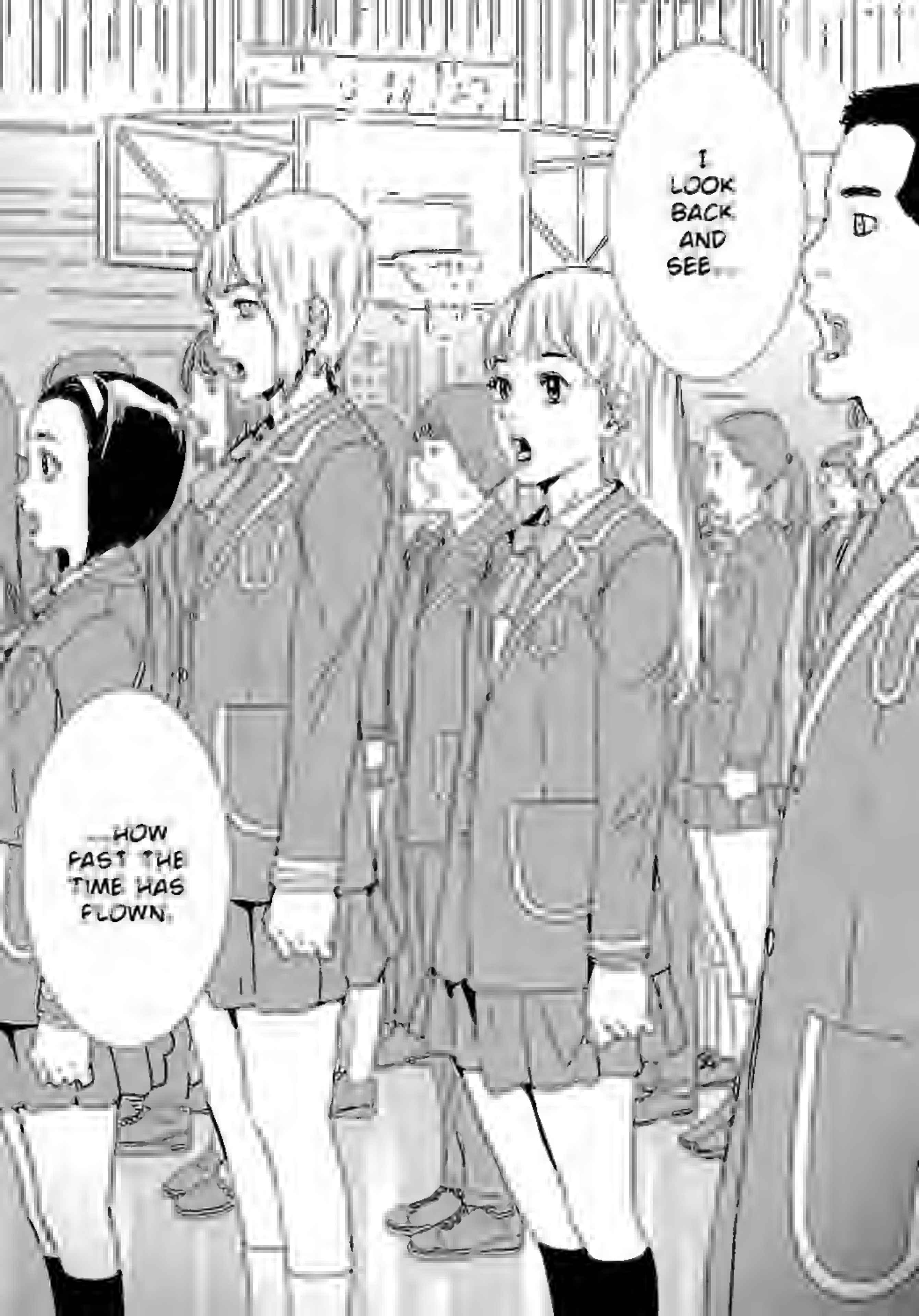

ASHE.
WHAT GAVE YOU THE IDEA OF HELPING OUT THE ELEMENT NETWORK?
THE ORGANIZATION BROKE DOWN, AND I HAD NOTHING BETTER TO DO, SO ANNA RIDDLE POINTED ME THIS WAY.
BUT I'M NOT HERE ASSISTING THE ELEMENT NETWORK.
I'M ASSISTING HARUKA TOOYAMA. THAT'S ALL.
...YOU'VE CHANGED, ASHE...
I AGREE.

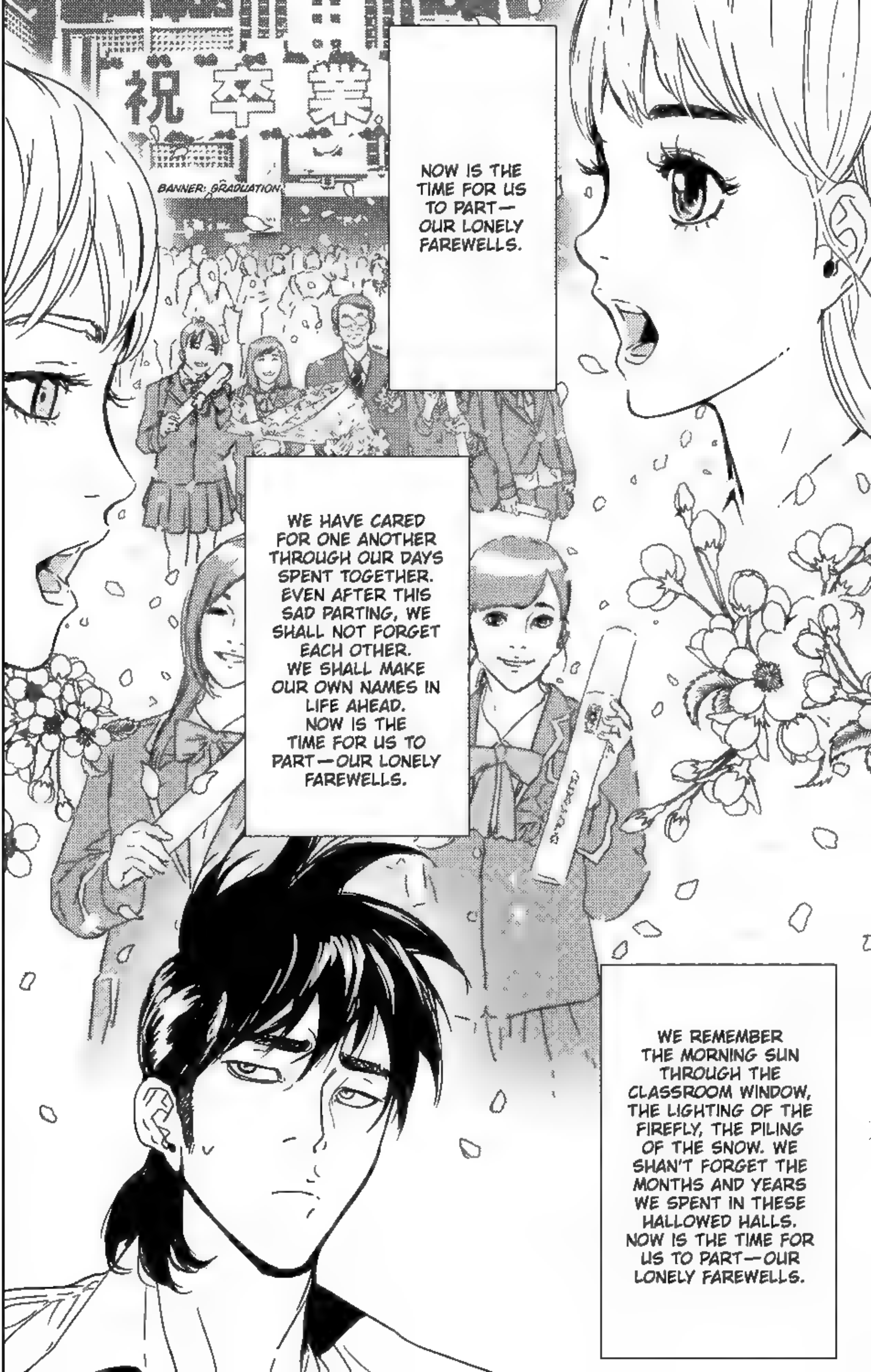

SENSEI!!
ASHE-SAAAN!!
THANKS TO A FRIEND, YOU MIGHT SAY.
THAT'S NOT ALL.
SHE SEES HER OWN CHILDHOOD INSIDE A SLAVERY OPERATION IN TOOYAMA'S PLIGHT.
THIS SHOULD MAKE YOU HAPPY, MIDOU. ASHE HAS INHERITED YOUR WILL.

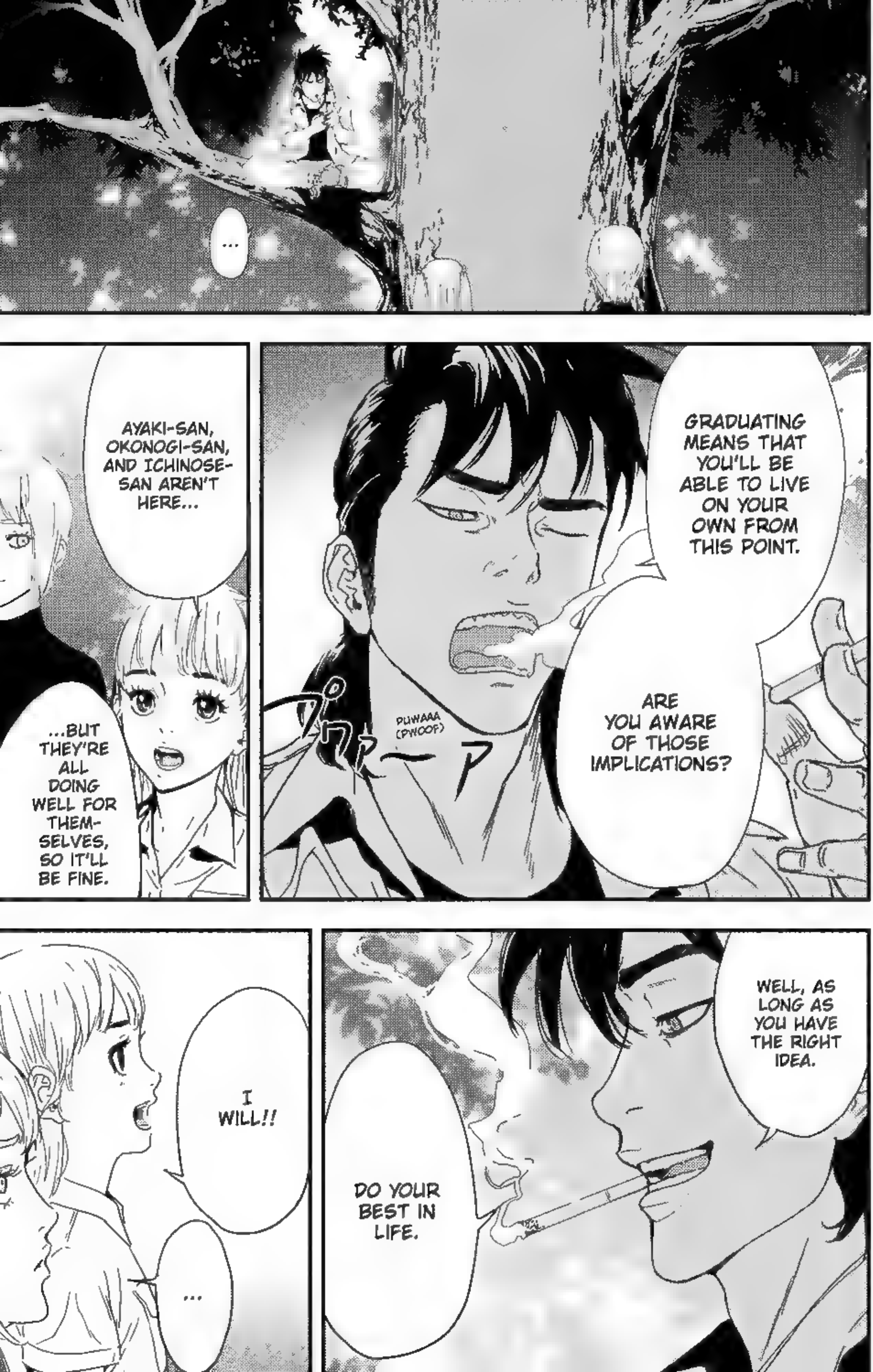

...
...
?
?
WELL, I WAS THINKING ...
UM, REALLY?
ARE YOU SERIOUS ABOUT THIS?
OH, I DON'T MIND. COME ON!
UHHH...
SHOULDN'T IT BE AT THE END OF THE YEAR? IS IT DIFFERENT IN JAPAN?
OKAY, WE'LL DO IT THE ORTHODOX WAY.
BUT I DON'T REMEMBER ALL THE WORDS. ISN'T IT A LITTLE OLD-FASHIONED?

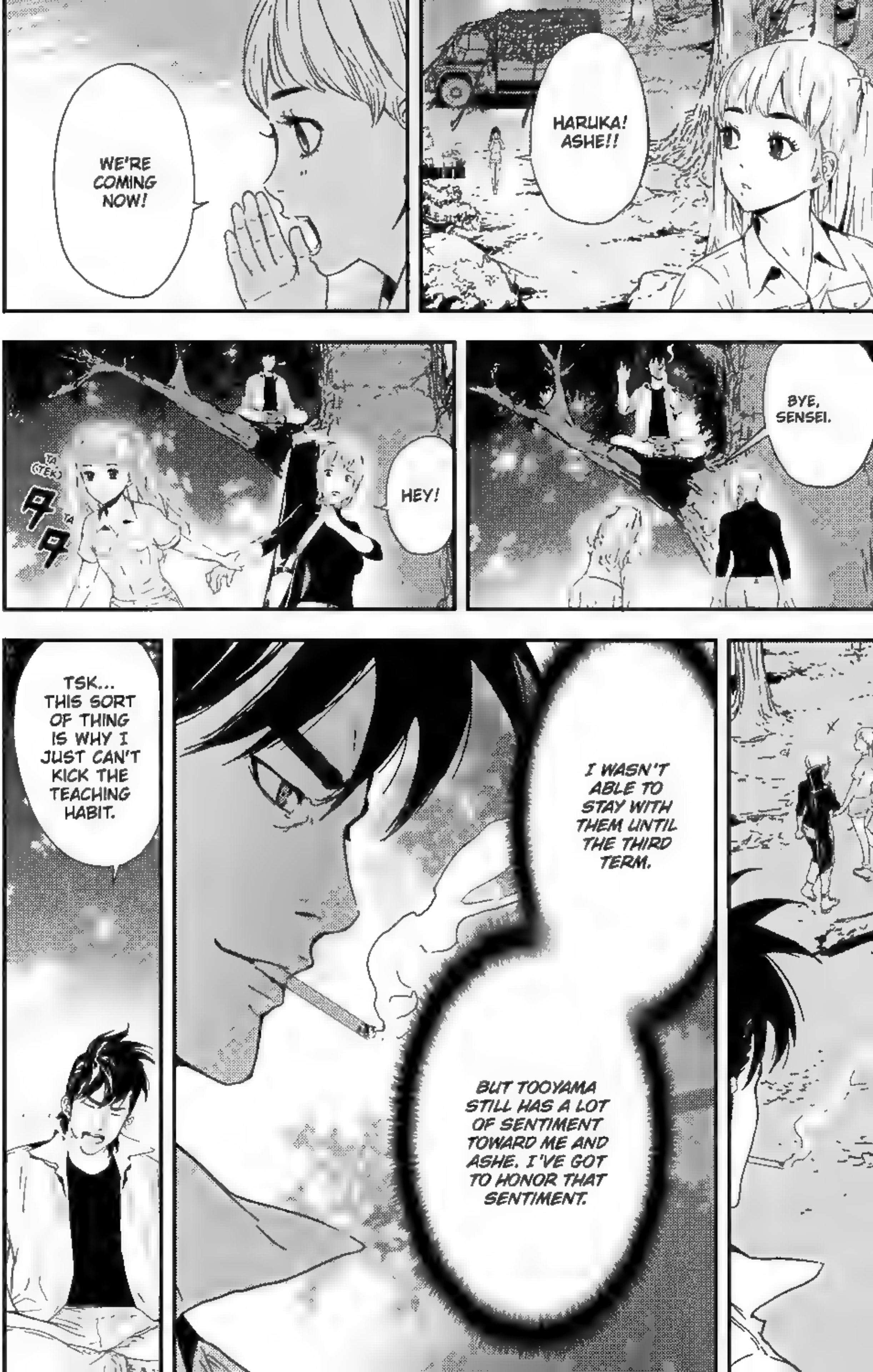

SENSEI! I HEREBY ANNOUNCE …
…THAT AS REPRESENTATIVE OF AITOU ACADEMY'S 2-B FUJISAWA CLASS…
…I AM UNDERTAKING MY OWN GRADUATION CEREMONY!

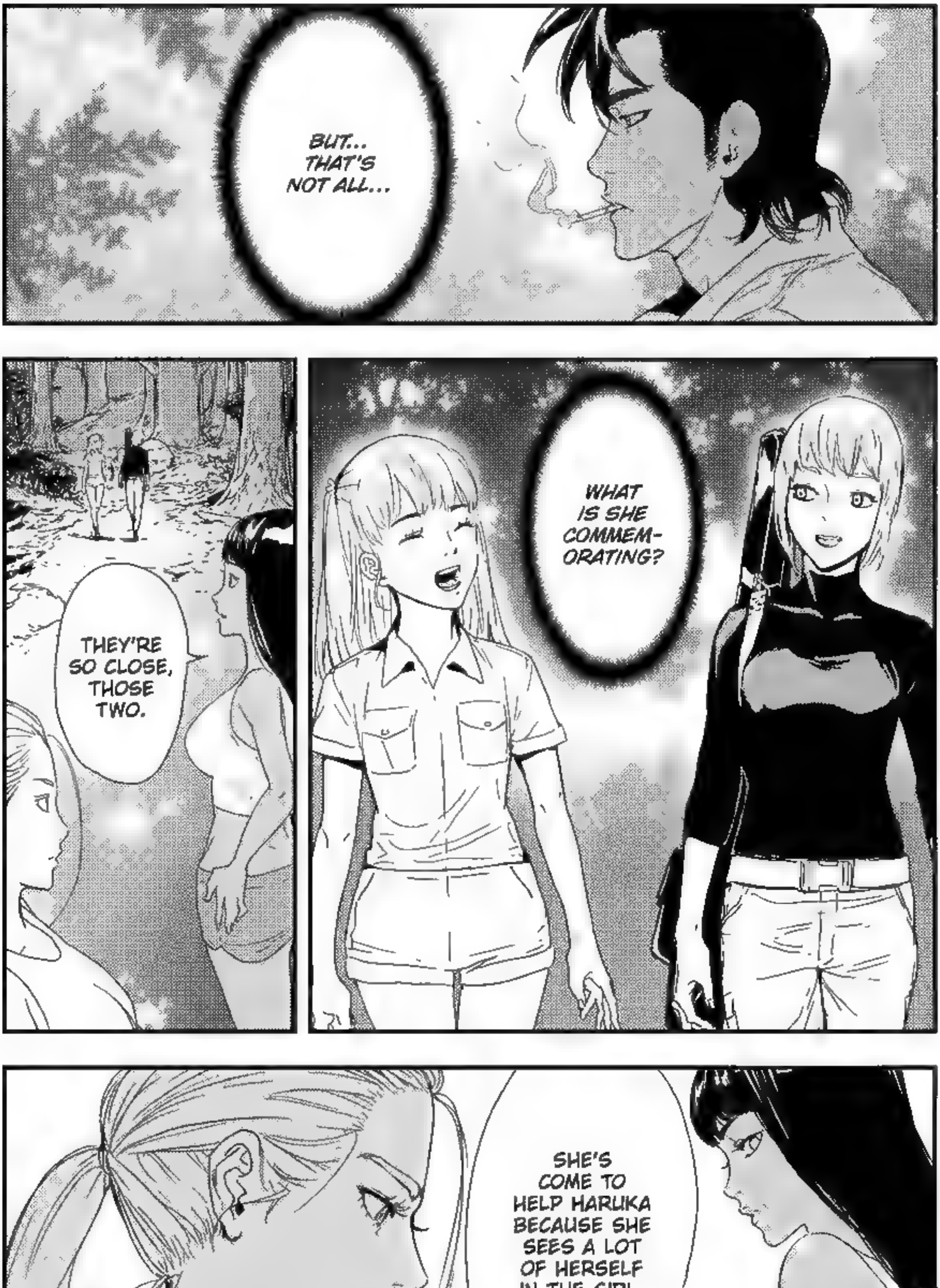

WHA—!?
AND A-ONE, TWO...
WE LOOK BACK FONDLY ON OUR HONORED TEACHERS.
AND THE YEARS THAT HAVE PASSED...
HAVE PASSED ...

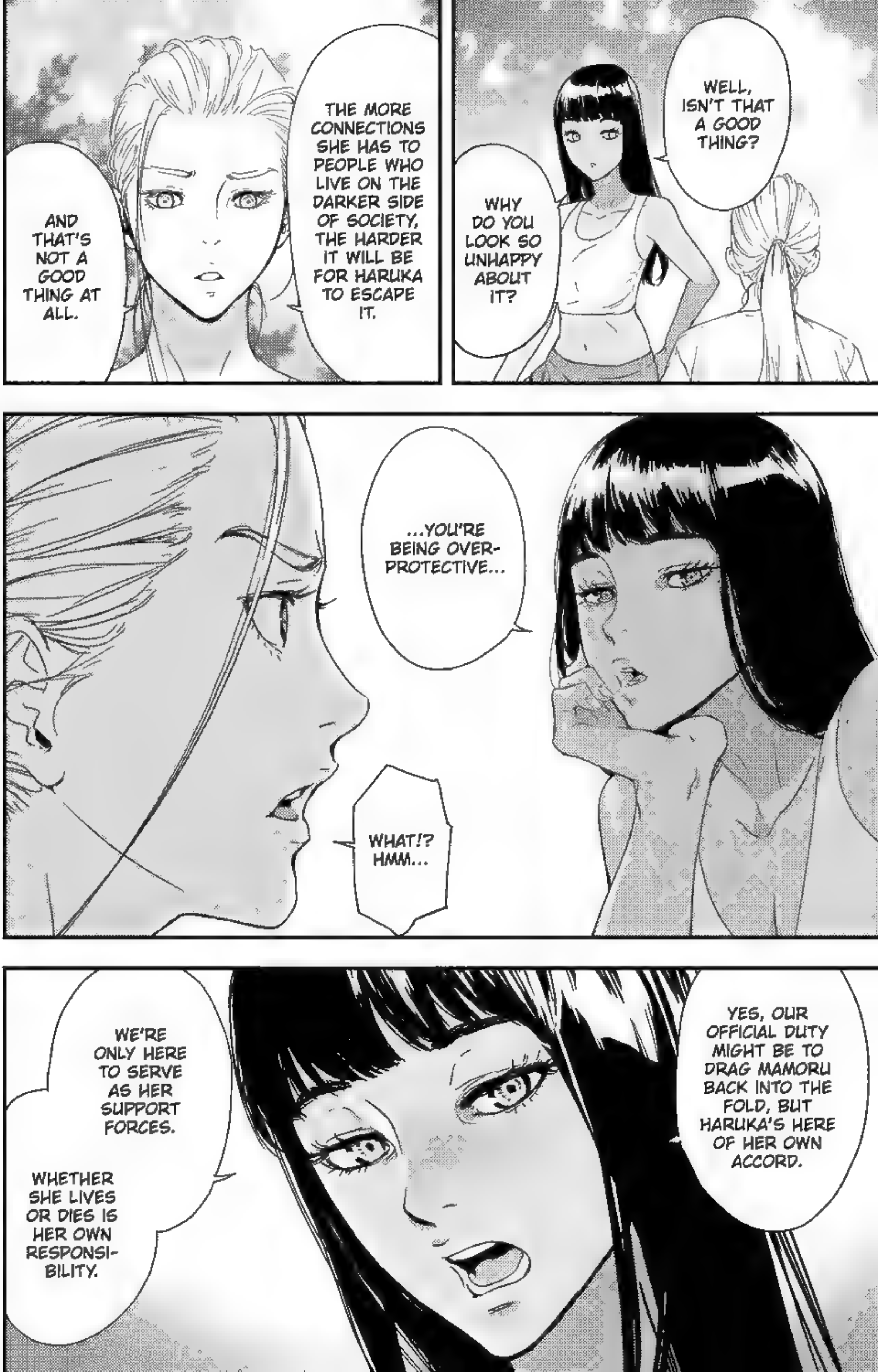

I LOOK BACK AND SEE...
...HOW FAST THE TIME HAS FLOWN.

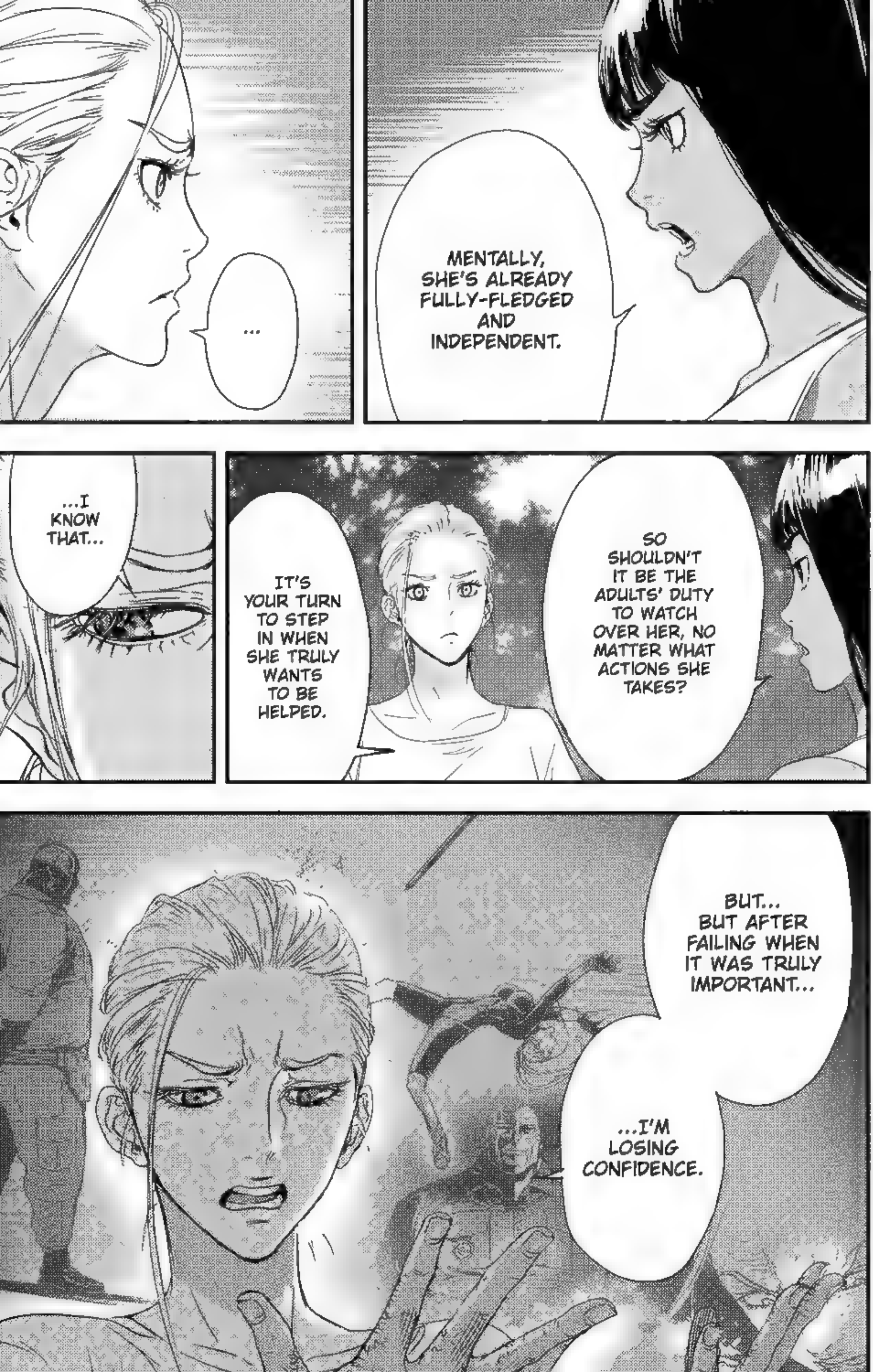

NOW IS THE TIME FOR US TO PART—OUR LONELY FAREWELLS.
祝卒業
BANNER: GRADUATION
WE HAVE CARED FOR ONE ANOTHER THROUGH OUR DAYS SPENT TOGETHER. EVEN AFTER THIS SAD PARTING, WE SHALL NOT FORGET EACH OTHER. WE SHALL MAKE OUR OWN NAMES IN LIFE AHEAD. NOW IS THE TIME FOR US TO PART—OUR LONELY FAREWELLS.
WE REMEMBER THE MORNING SUN THROUGH THE CLASSROOM WINDOW, THE LIGHTING OF THE FIREFLY, THE PILING OF THE SNOW. WE SHAN'T FORGET THE MONTHS AND YEARS WE SPENT IN THESE HALLOWED HALLS. NOW IS THE TIME FOR US TO PART—OUR LONELY FAREWELLS.

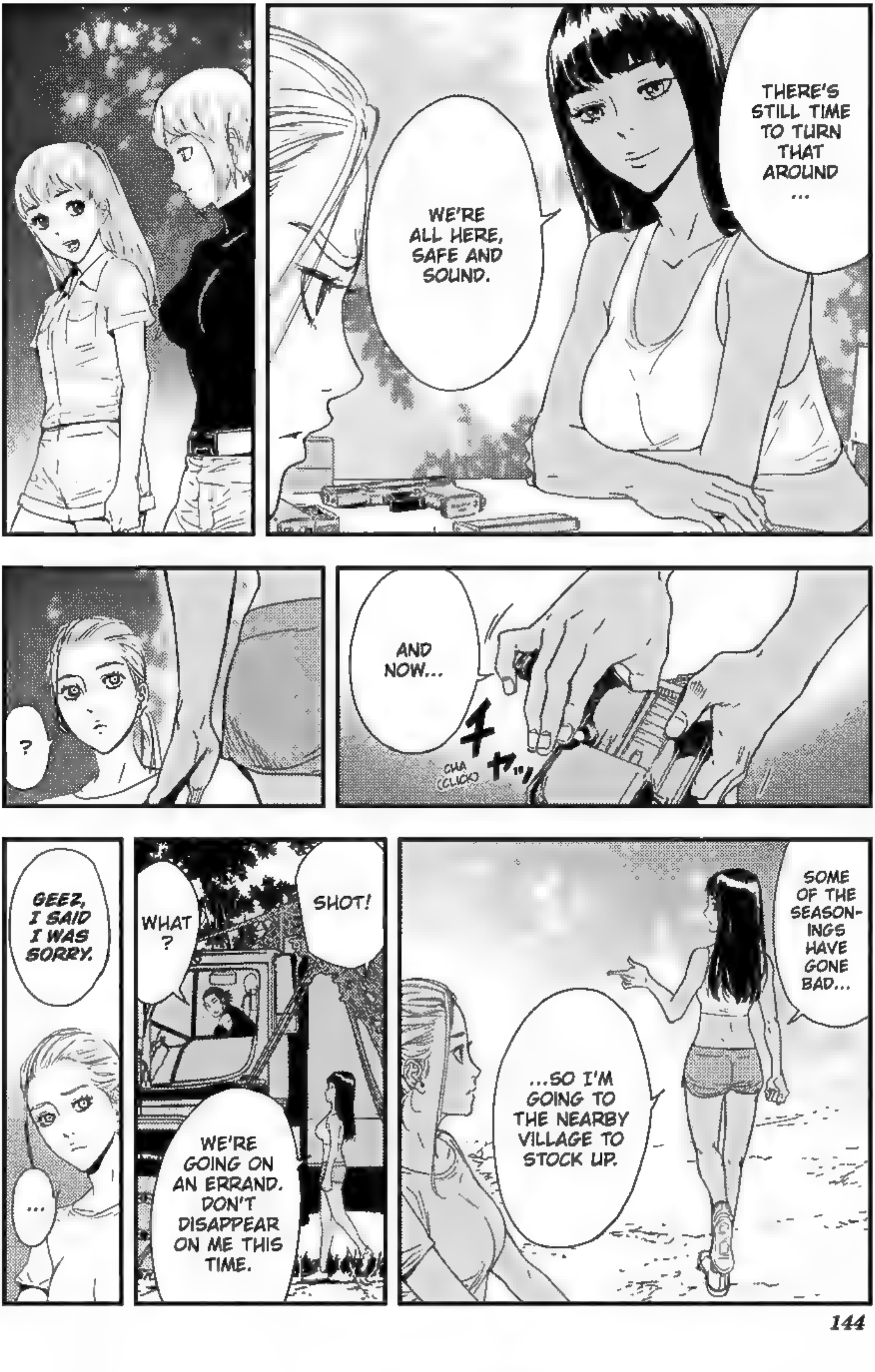

...
GRADUATING MEANS THAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO LIVE ON YOUR OWN FROM THIS POINT.
ARE YOU AWARE OF THOSE IMPLICATIONS?
プハァーア
PUWAAA (PWOOF)
AYAKI-SAN, OKONOGI-SAN, AND ICHINOSE-SAN AREN'T HERE...
...BUT THEY'RE ALL DOING WELL FOR THEMSELVES, SO IT'LL BE FINE.
WELL, AS LONG AS YOU HAVE THE RIGHT IDEA.
DO YOUR BEST IN LIFE.
I WILL!!
...

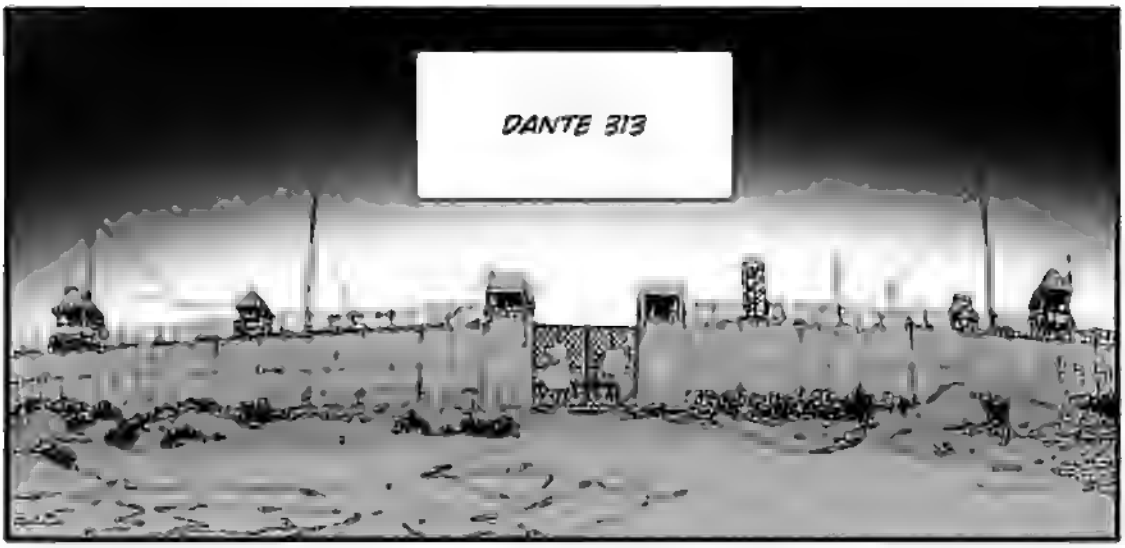

HARUKA! ASHE!!
WE'RE COMING NOW!
BYE, SENSEI.
HEY!
TA (TEK) TA
I WASN'T ABLE TO STAY WITH THEM UNTIL THE THIRD TERM.
BUT TOOYAMA STILL HAS A LOT OF SENTIMENT TOWARD ME AND ASHE. I'VE GOT TO HONOR THAT SENTIMENT.
TSK... THIS SORT OF THING IS WHY I JUST CAN'T KICK THE TEACHING HABIT.

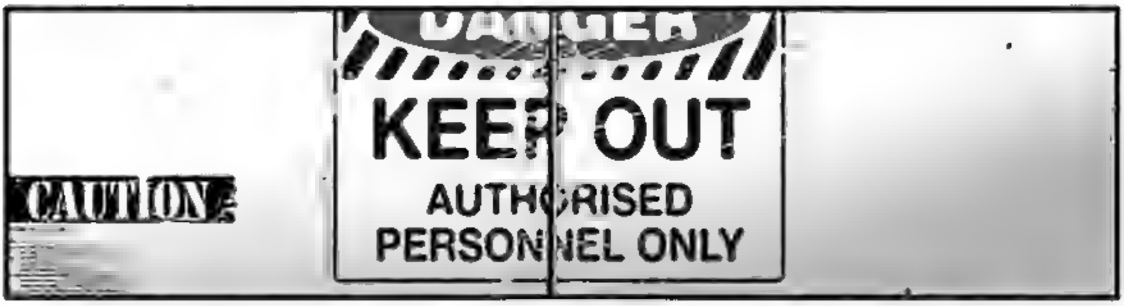

BUT... THAT'S NOT ALL...
WHAT IS SHE COMMEMORATING?
THEY'RE SO CLOSE, THOSE TWO.
SHE'S COME TO HELP HARUKA BECAUSE SHE SEES A LOT OF HERSELF IN THE GIRL.

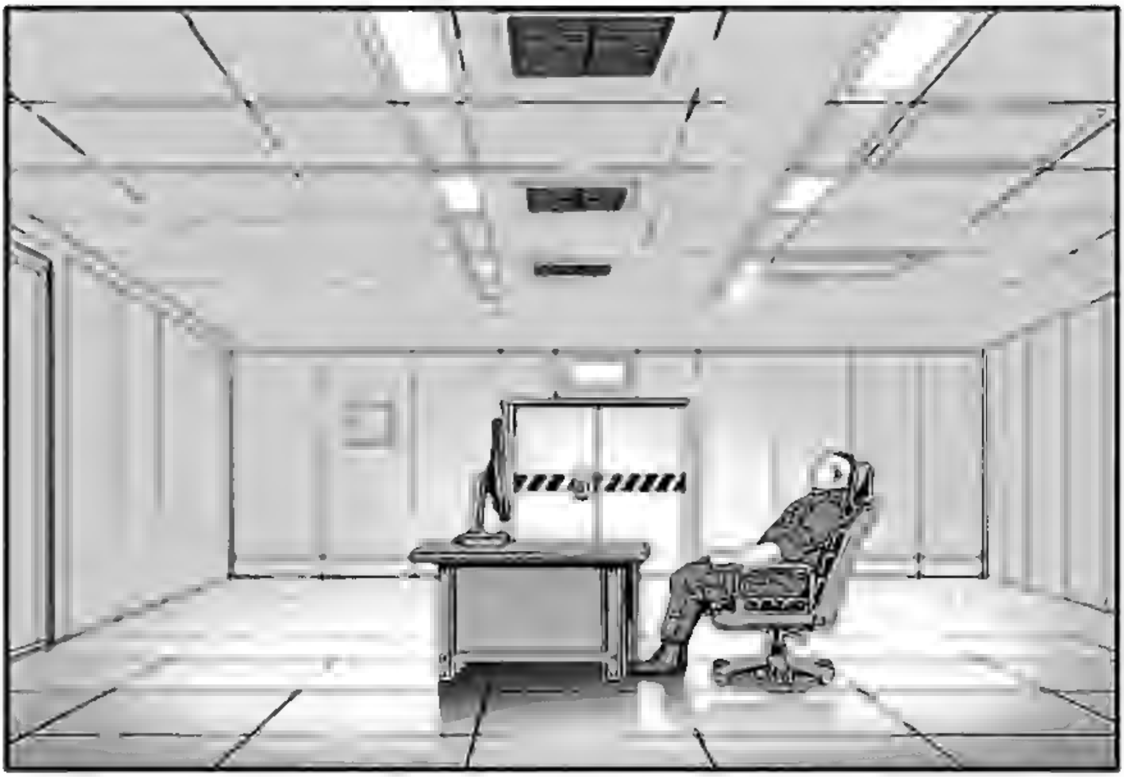

WELL, ISN'T THAT A GOOD THING?
WHY DO YOU LOOK SO UNHAPPY ABOUT IT?
THE MORE CONNECTIONS SHE HAS TO PEOPLE WHO LIVE ON THE DARKER SIDE OF SOCIETY, THE HARDER IT WILL BE FOR HARUKA TO ESCAPE IT.
AND THAT'S NOT A GOOD THING AT ALL.
...YOU'RE BEING OVER-PROTECTIVE...
WHAT!? HMM...
YES, OUR OFFICIAL DUTY MIGHT BE TO DRAG MAMORU BACK INTO THE FOLD, BUT HARUKA'S HERE OF HER OWN ACCORD.
WE'RE ONLY HERE TO SERVE AS HER SUPPORT FORCES.
WHETHER SHE LIVES OR DIES IS HER OWN RESPONSIBILITY.

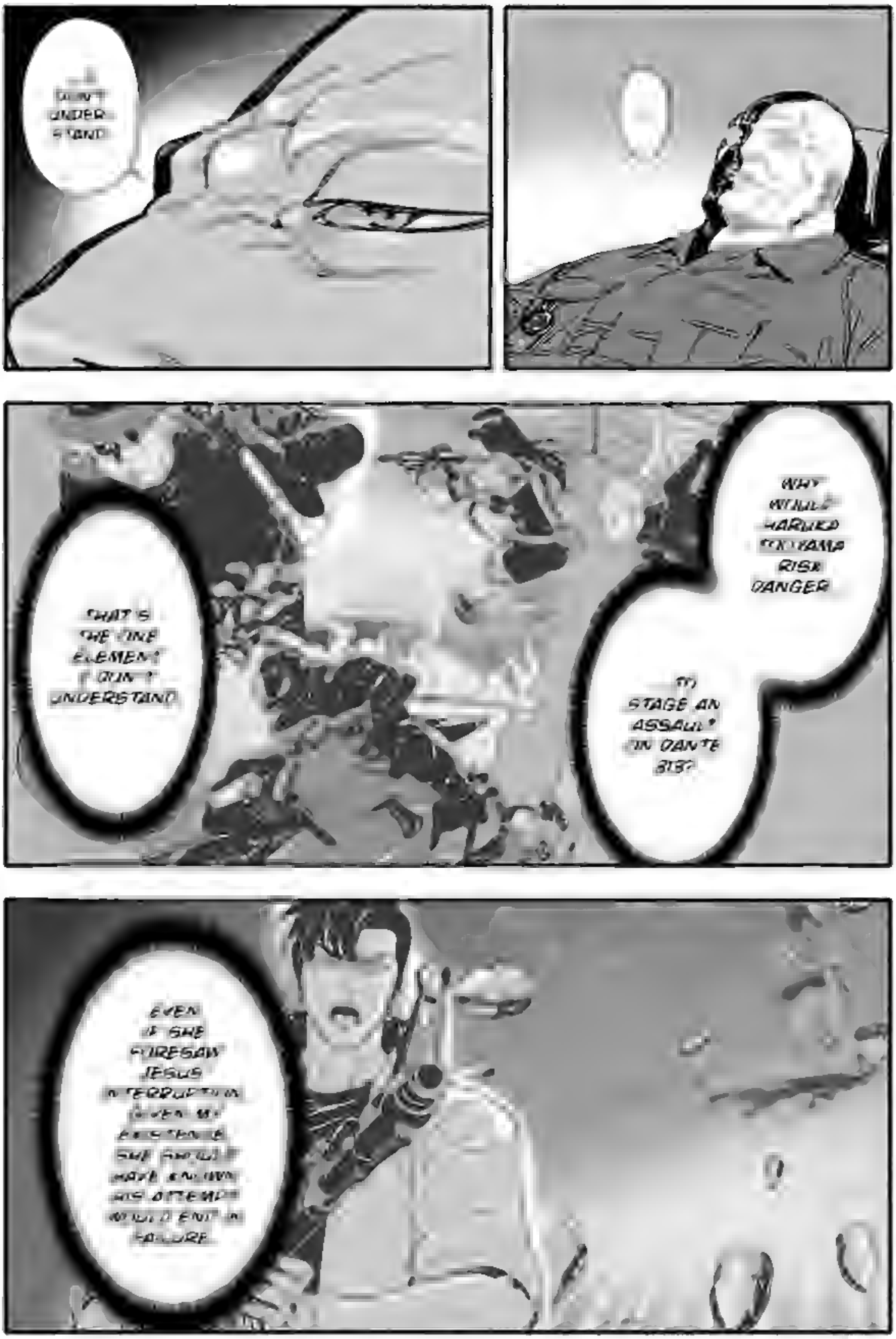

MENTALLY, SHE'S ALREADY FULLY-FLEDGED AND INDEPENDENT.
...
SO SHOULDN'T IT BE THE ADULTS' DUTY TO WATCH OVER HER, NO MATTER WHAT ACTIONS SHE TAKES?
IT'S YOUR TURN TO STEP IN WHEN SHE TRULY WANTS TO BE HELPED.
...I KNOW THAT...
BUT... BUT AFTER FAILING WHEN IT WAS TRULY IMPORTANT...
...I'M LOSING CONFIDENCE.

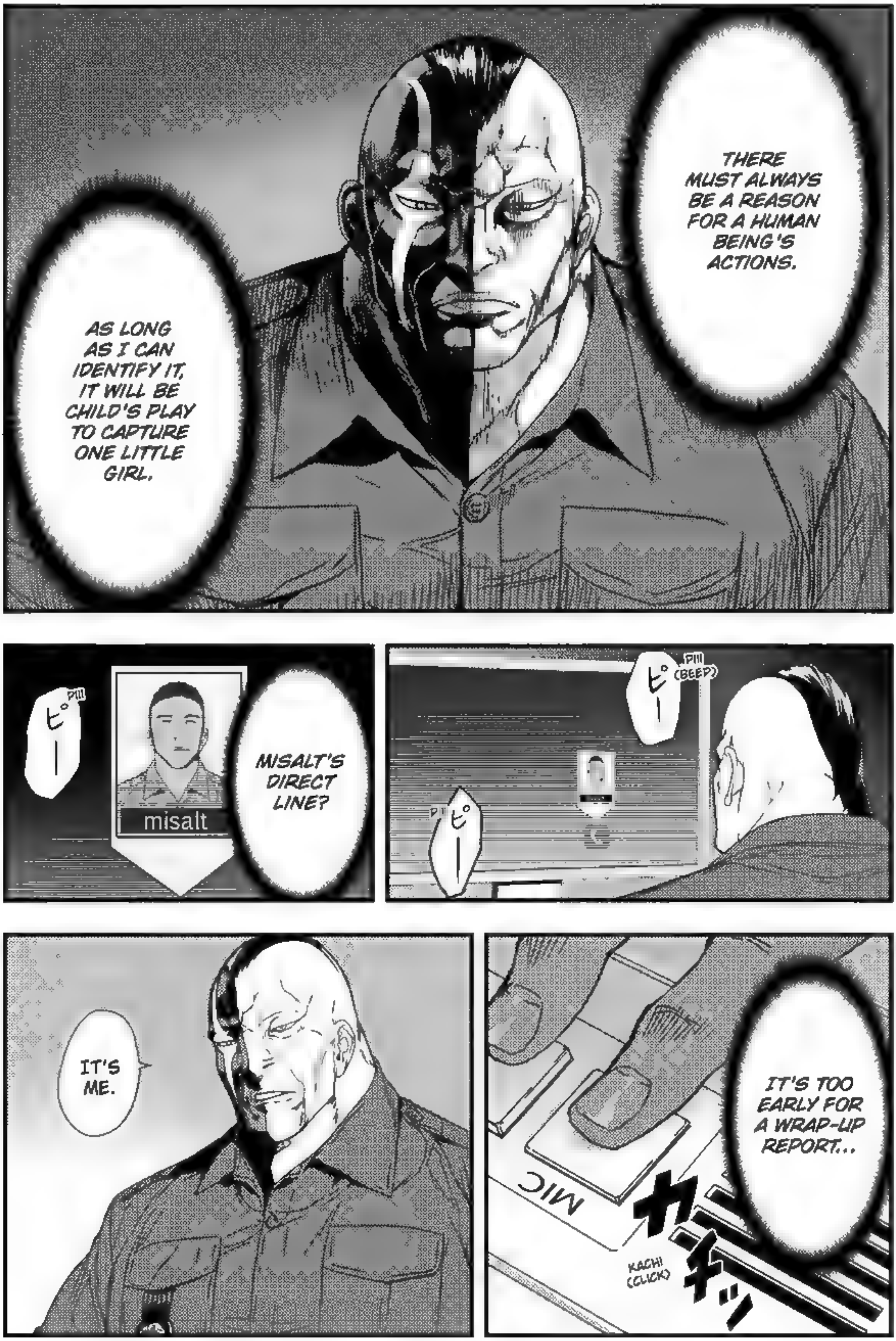

THERE'S STILL TIME TO TURN THAT AROUND ...
WE'RE ALL HERE, SAFE AND SOUND.
AND NOW...
チャッ
CHA (CLICK)
?
SOME OF THE SEASONINGS HAVE GONE BAD...
...SO I'M GOING TO THE NEARBY VILLAGE TO STOCK UP.
SHOT!
WHAT?
WE'RE GOING ON AN ERRAND. DON'T DISAPPEAR ON ME THIS TIME.
GEEZ, I SAID I WAS SORRY.
...

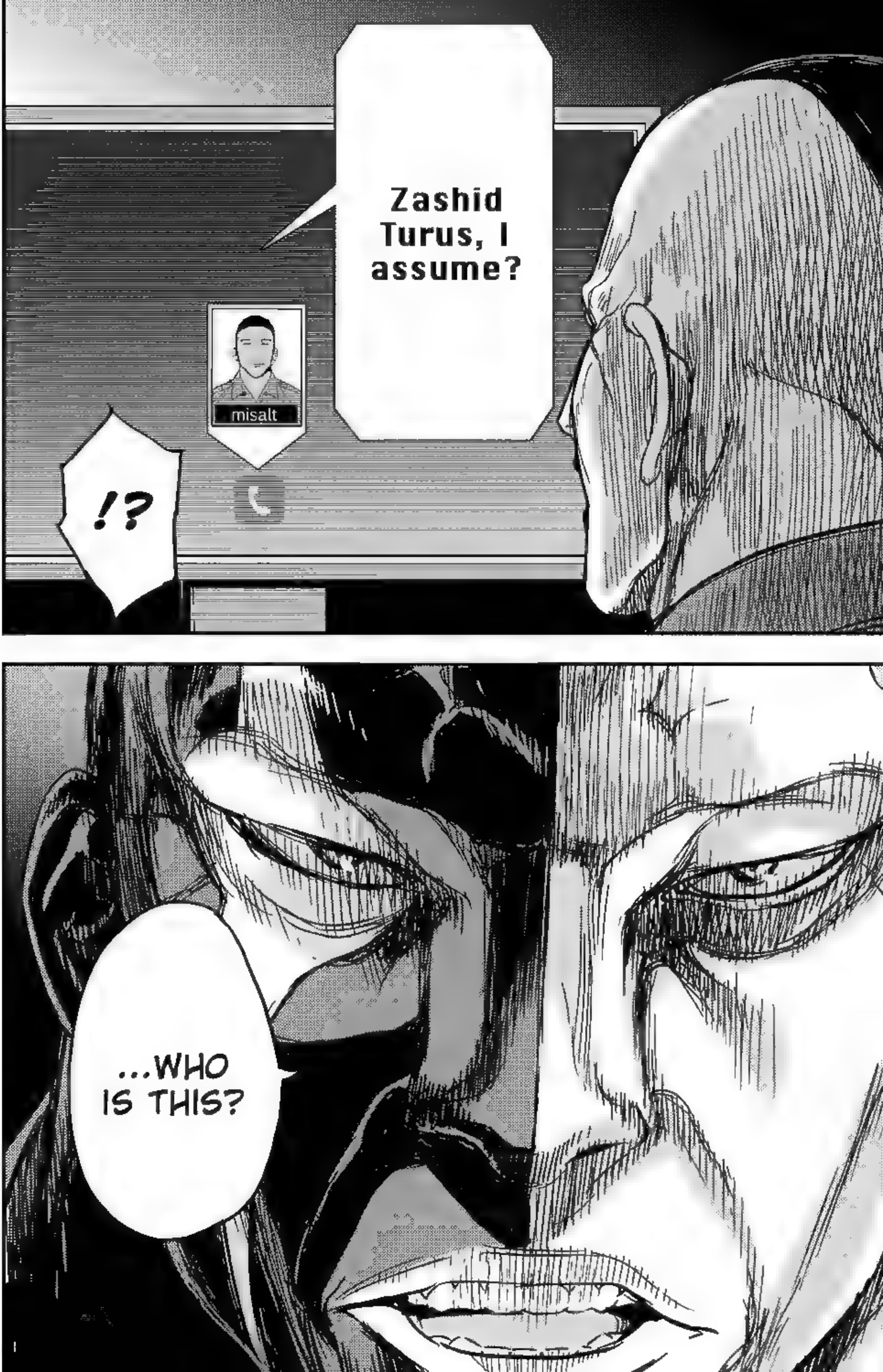

DANTE 313

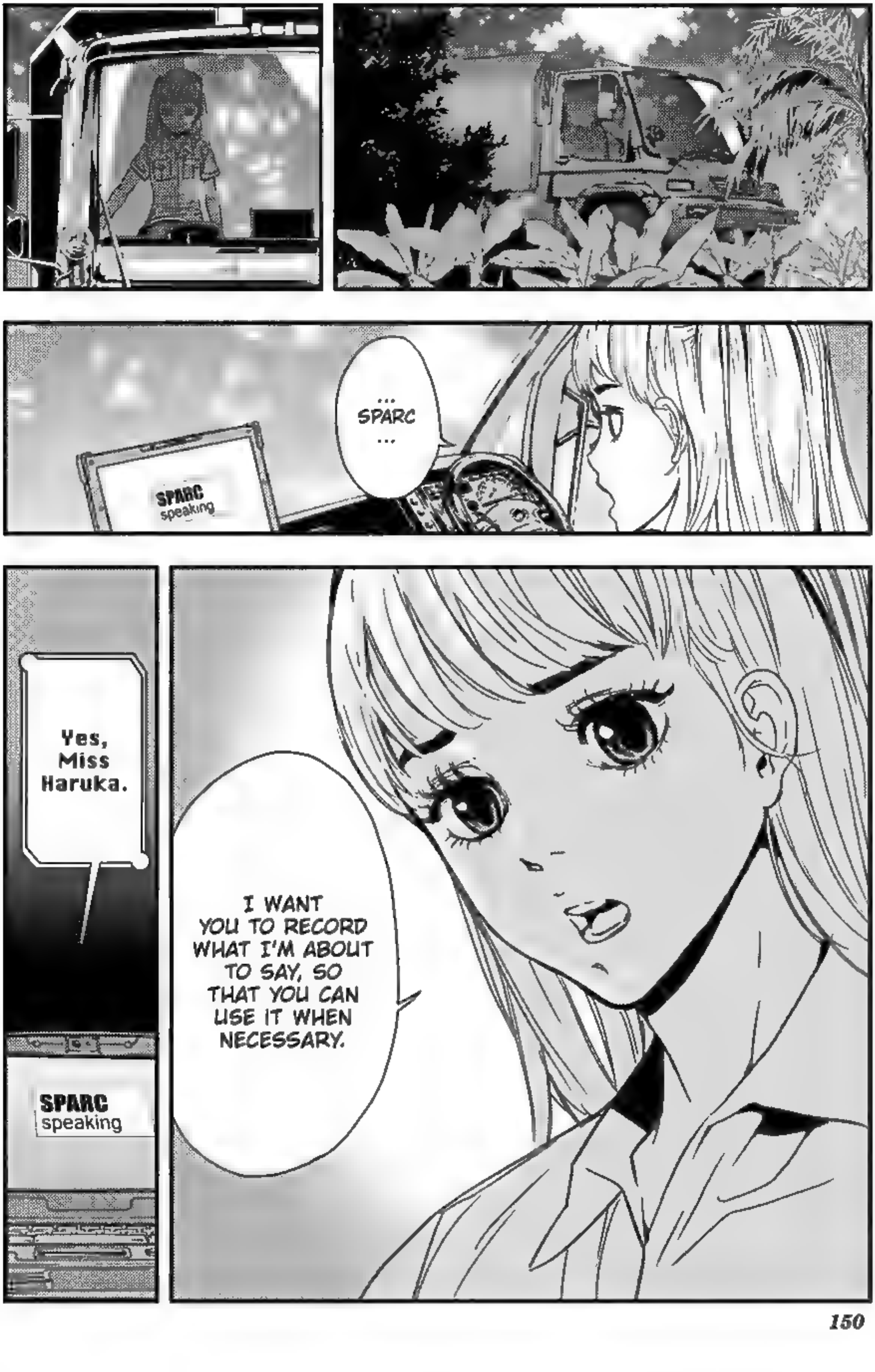

KEEP OUT
AUTHORISED PERSONNEL ONLY
CAUTION

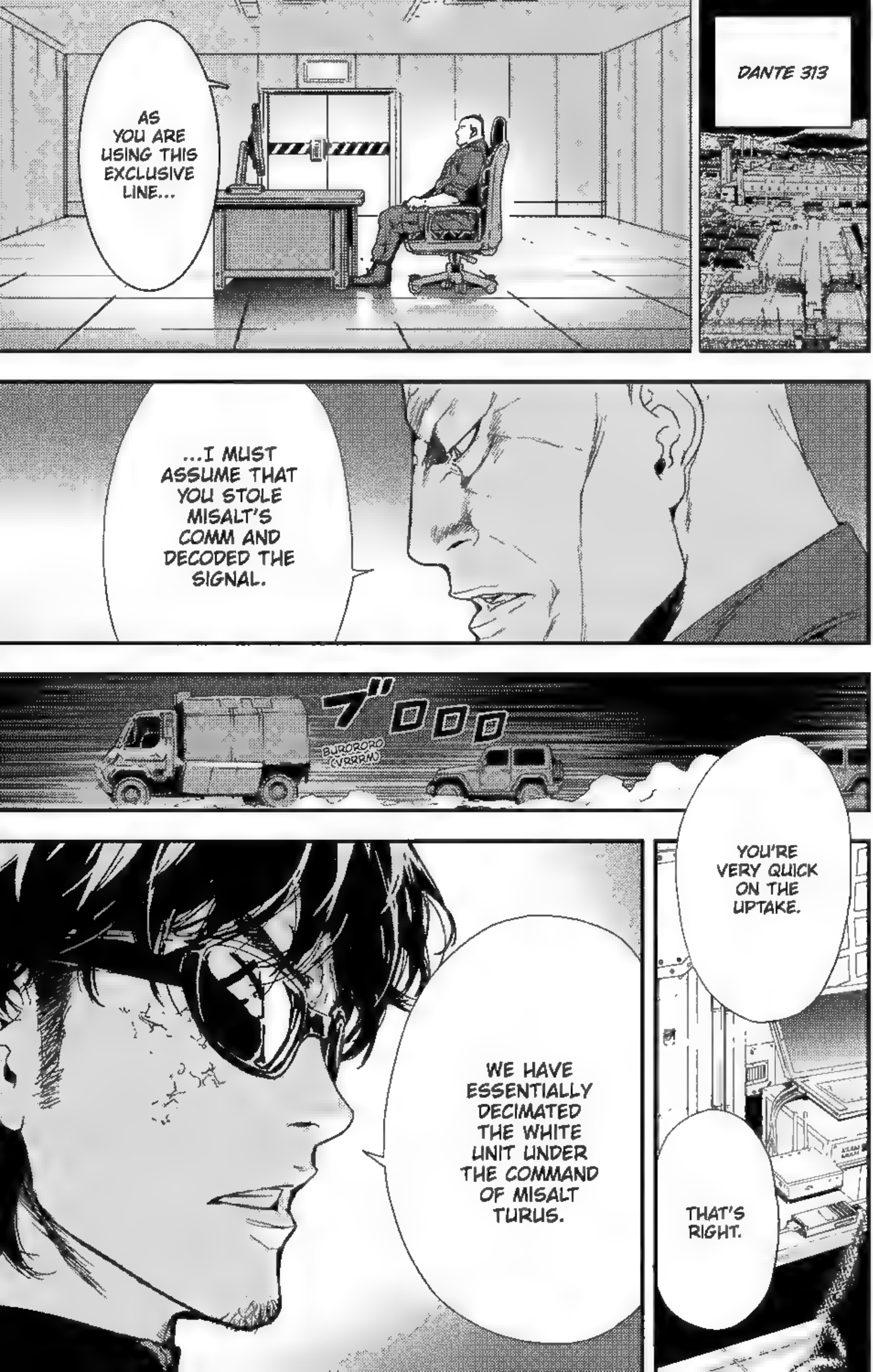


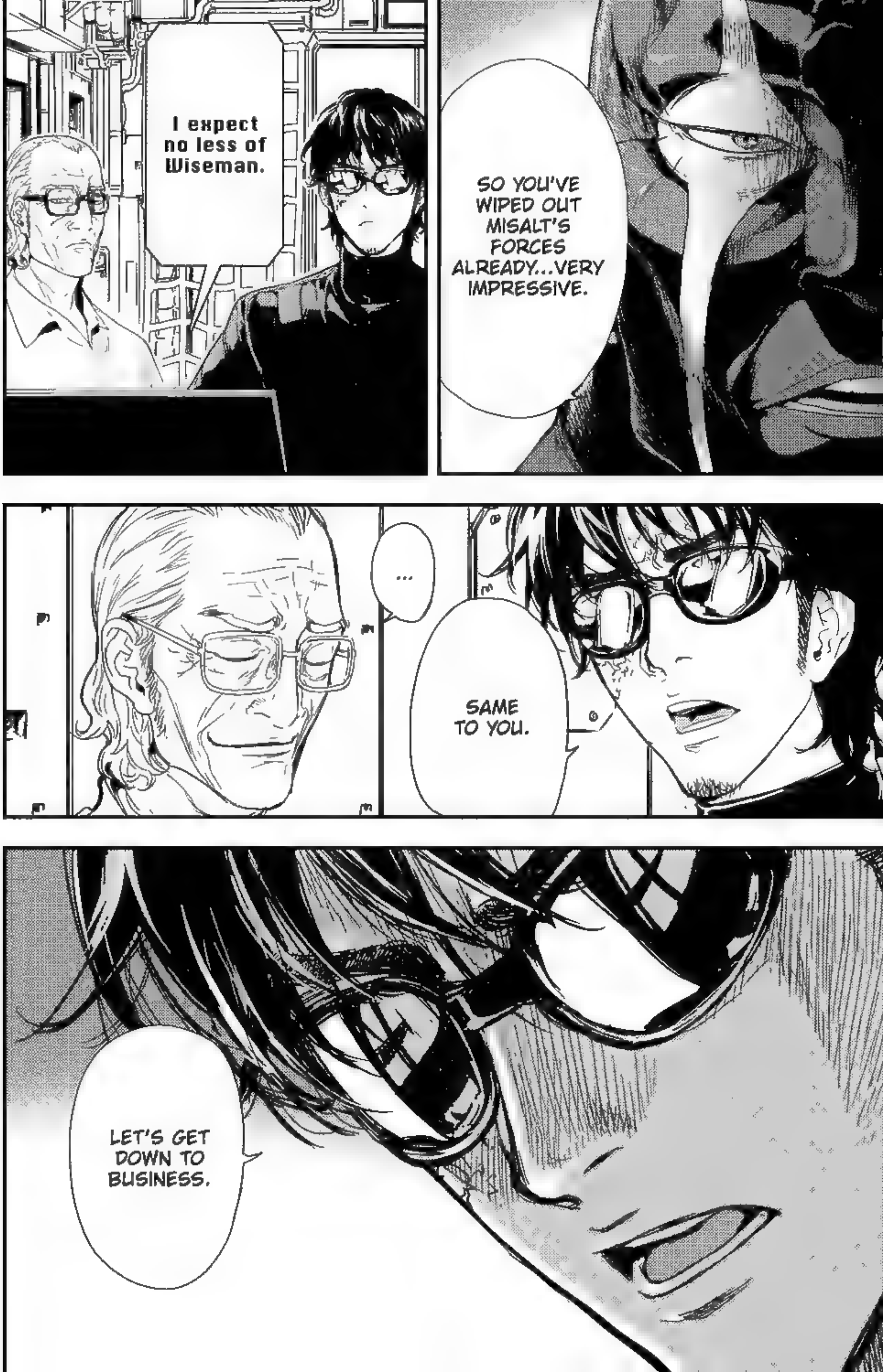

...I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
WHY WOULD HARUKA KOYAMA RISK DANGER
...TO STAGE AN ASSAULT ON DANTE 813?
THAT'S THE ONE ELEMENT I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
EVEN IF SHE FORESAW JESUS' INTERRUPTION GIVEN MY EXISTENCE, SHE SHOULD HAVE KNOWN HIS ATTEMPT WOULD END IN FAILURE.


THERE MUST ALWAYS BE A REASON FOR A HUMAN BEING'S ACTIONS.
AS LONG AS I CAN IDENTIFY IT, IT WILL BE CHILD'S PLAY TO CAPTURE ONE LITTLE GIRL.
ピー
PIII (BEEP)
ピー
PI
ピー
PIII
misalt
MISALT'S DIRECT LINE?
IT'S TOO EARLY FOR A WRAP-UP REPORT...
MIC
カチッ
KACHI (CLICK)
IT'S ME.

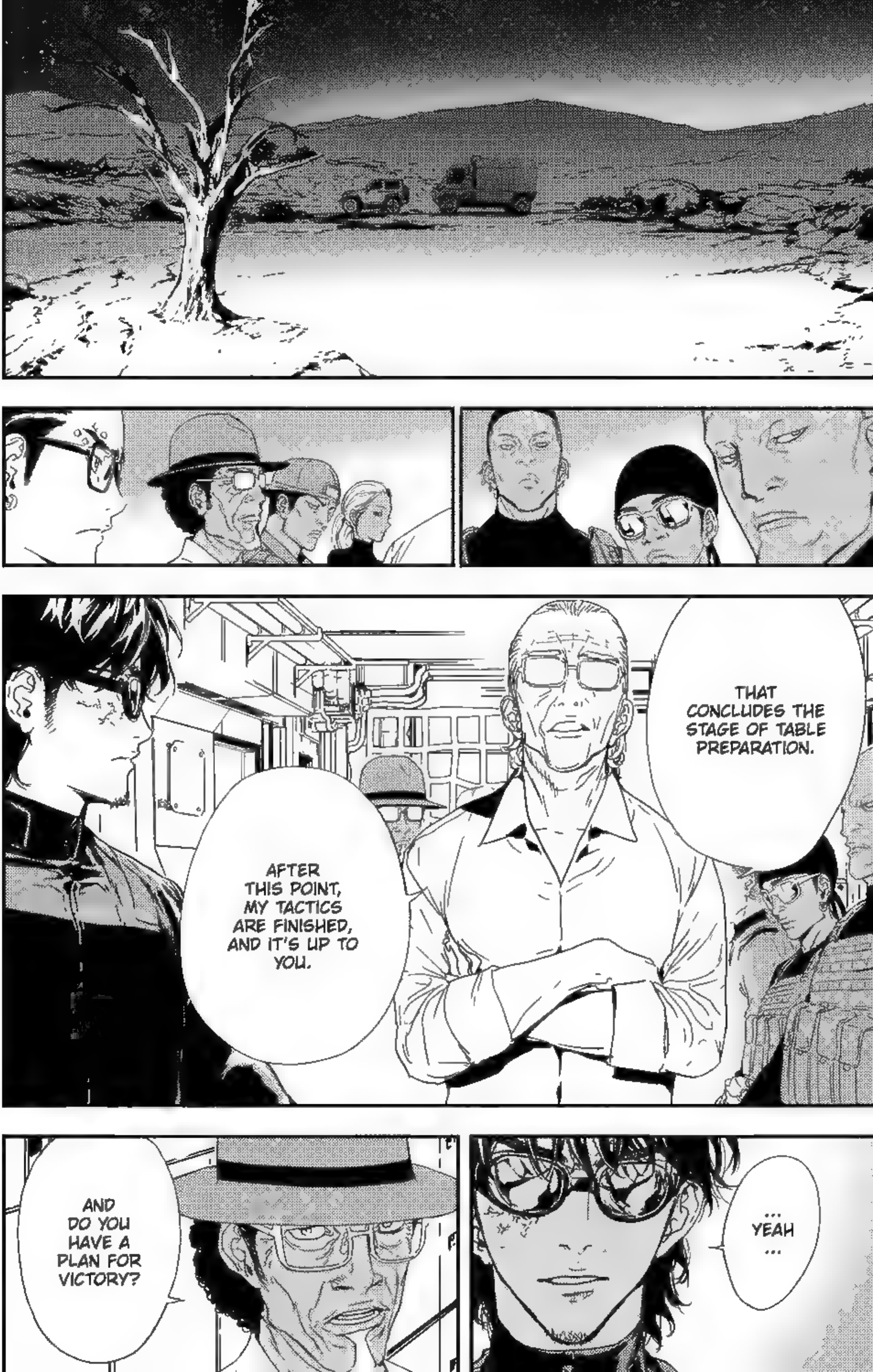

Zashid Turus, I assume?
misalt
!?
...WHO IS THIS?

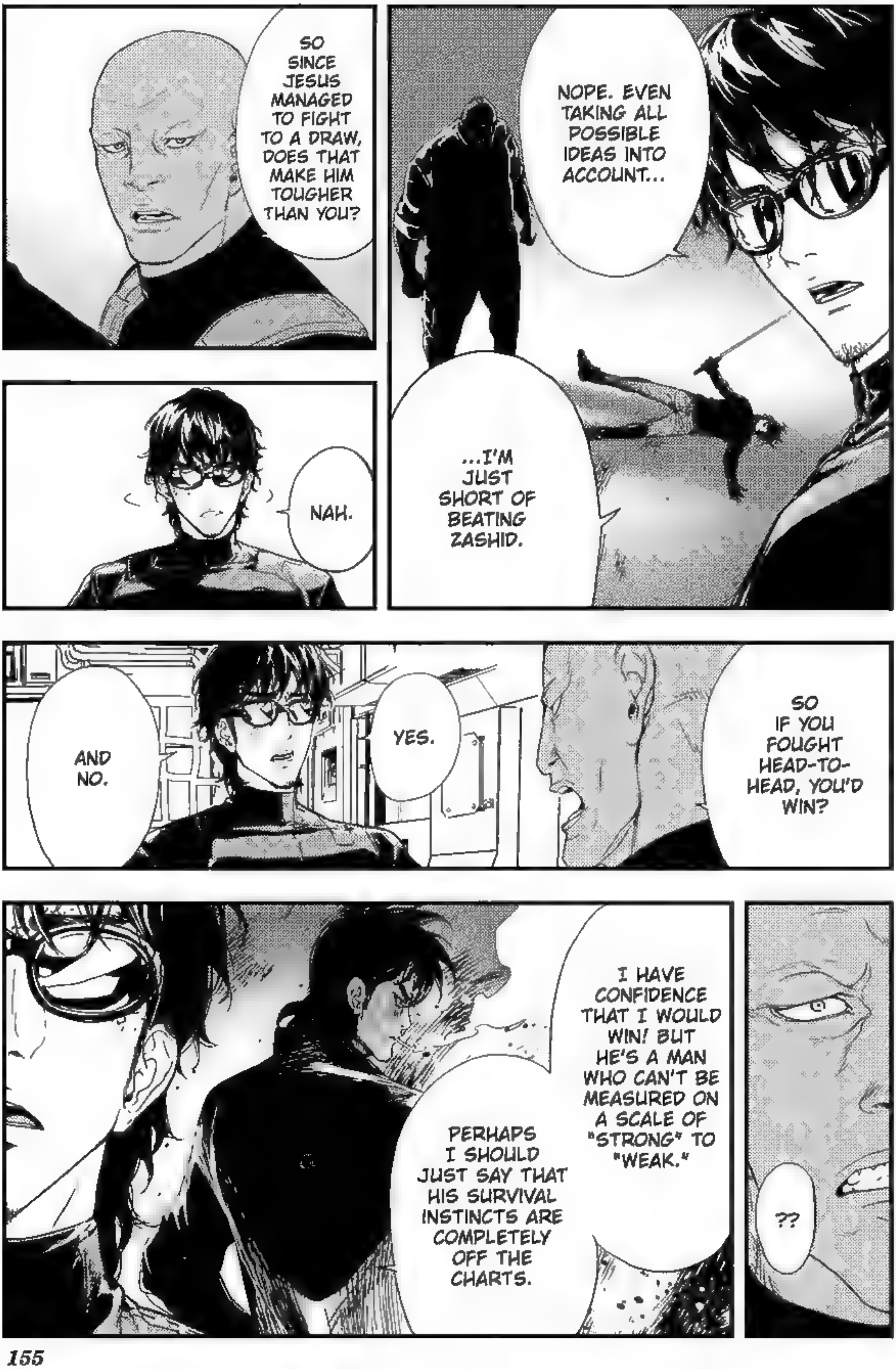

... SPARC ...
SPARC speaking
I WANT YOU TO RECORD WHAT I'M ABOUT TO SAY, SO THAT YOU CAN USE IT WHEN NECESSARY.
Yes, Miss Haruka.
SPARC speaking

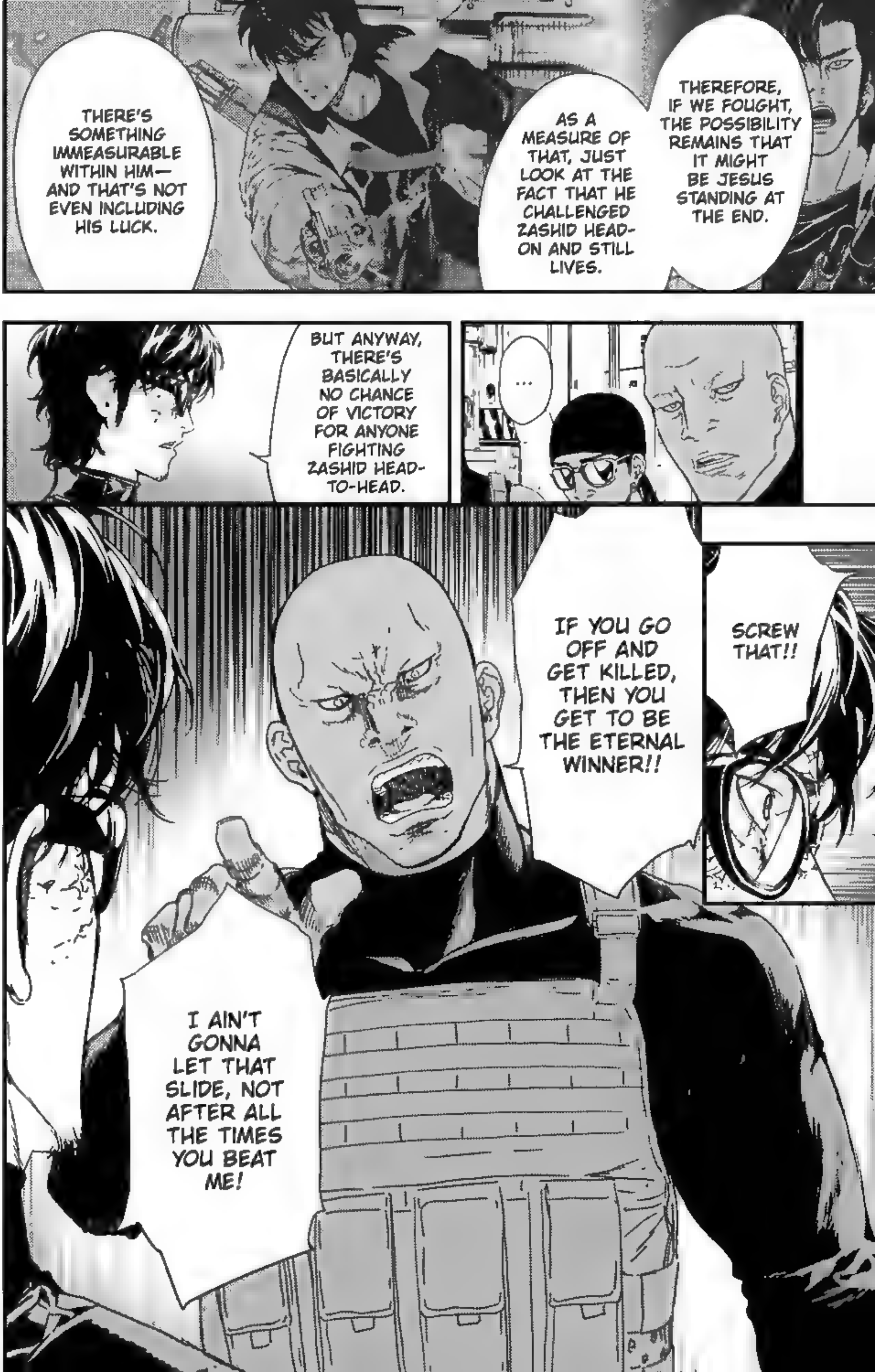

DANTE 313
AS YOU ARE USING THIS EXCLUSIVE LINE...
...I MUST ASSUME THAT YOU STOLE MISALT'S COMM AND DECODED THE SIGNAL.
ブロロロ
BURORORO (VRRRM)
YOU'RE VERY QUICK ON THE UPTAKE.
WE HAVE ESSENTIALLY DECIMATED THE WHITE UNIT UNDER THE COMMAND OF MISALT TURUS.
THAT'S RIGHT.

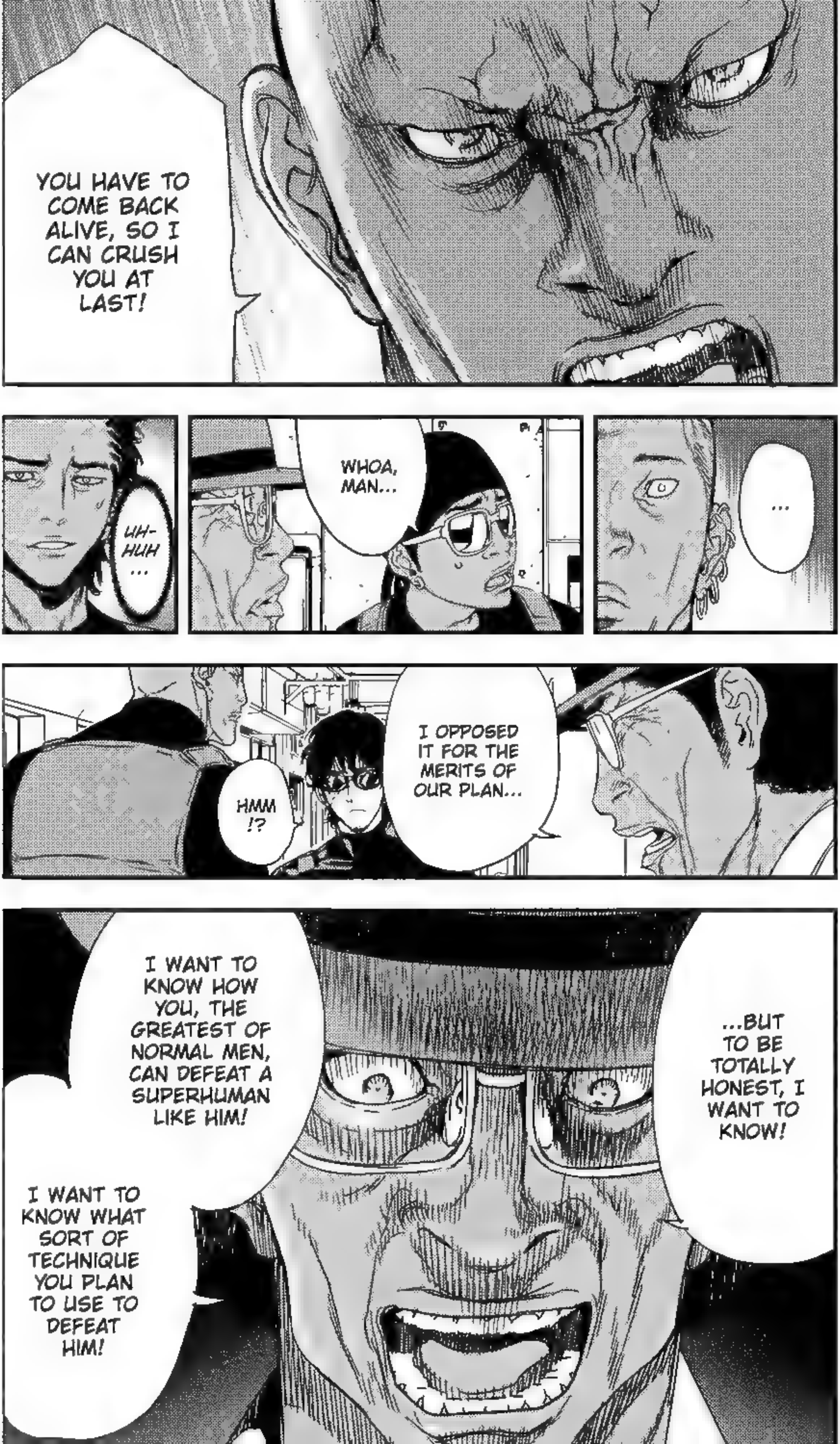

SO YOU'VE WIPED OUT MISALT'S FORCES ALREADY...VERY IMPRESSIVE.
I expect no less of Wiseman.
SAME TO YOU.
...
LET'S GET DOWN TO BUSINESS.

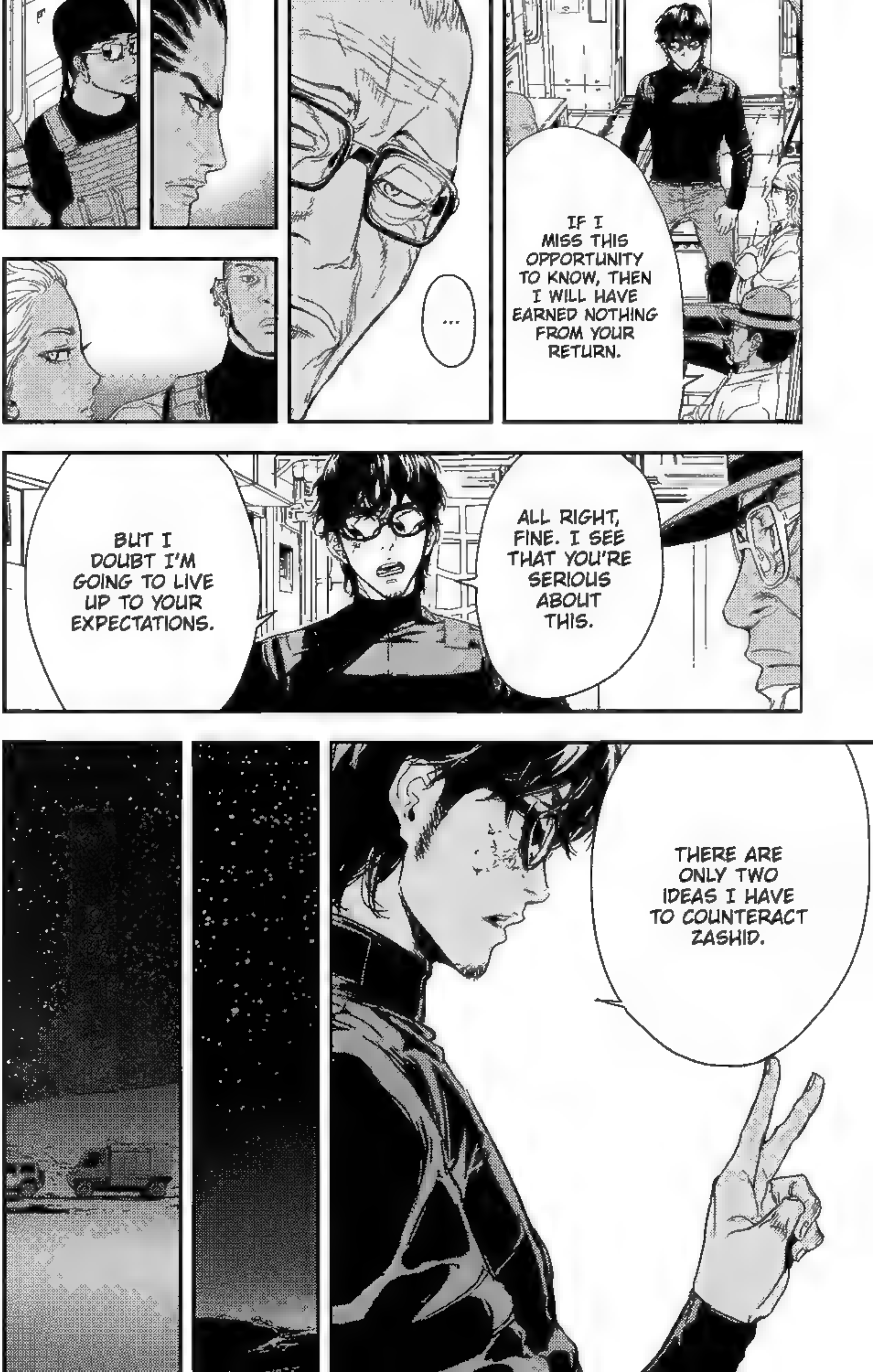
chapter 201

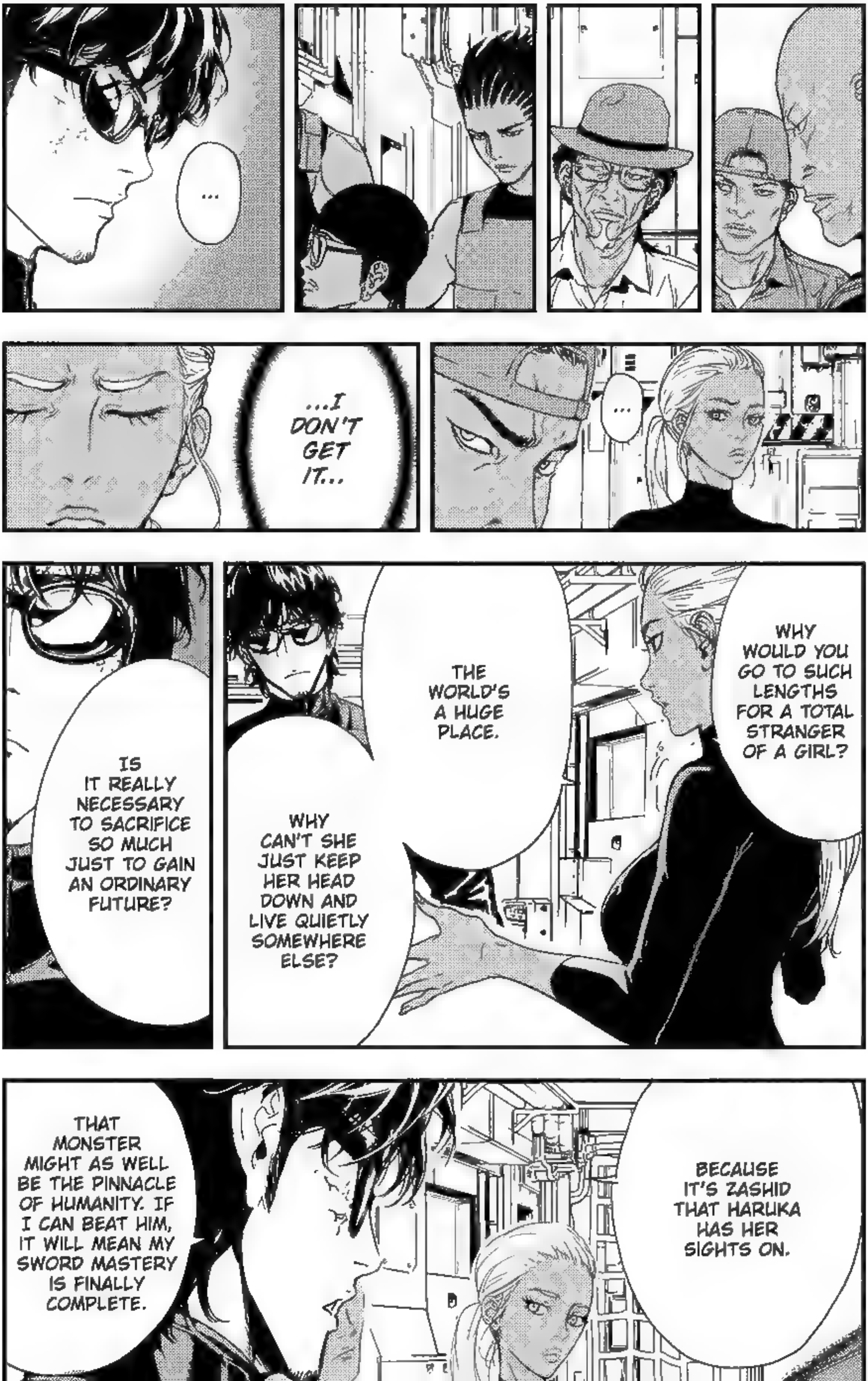

AFTER THIS POINT, MY TACTICS ARE FINISHED, AND IT'S UP TO YOU.
THAT CONCLUDES THE STAGE OF TABLE PREPARATION.
AND DO YOU HAVE A PLAN FOR VICTORY?
...YEAH...

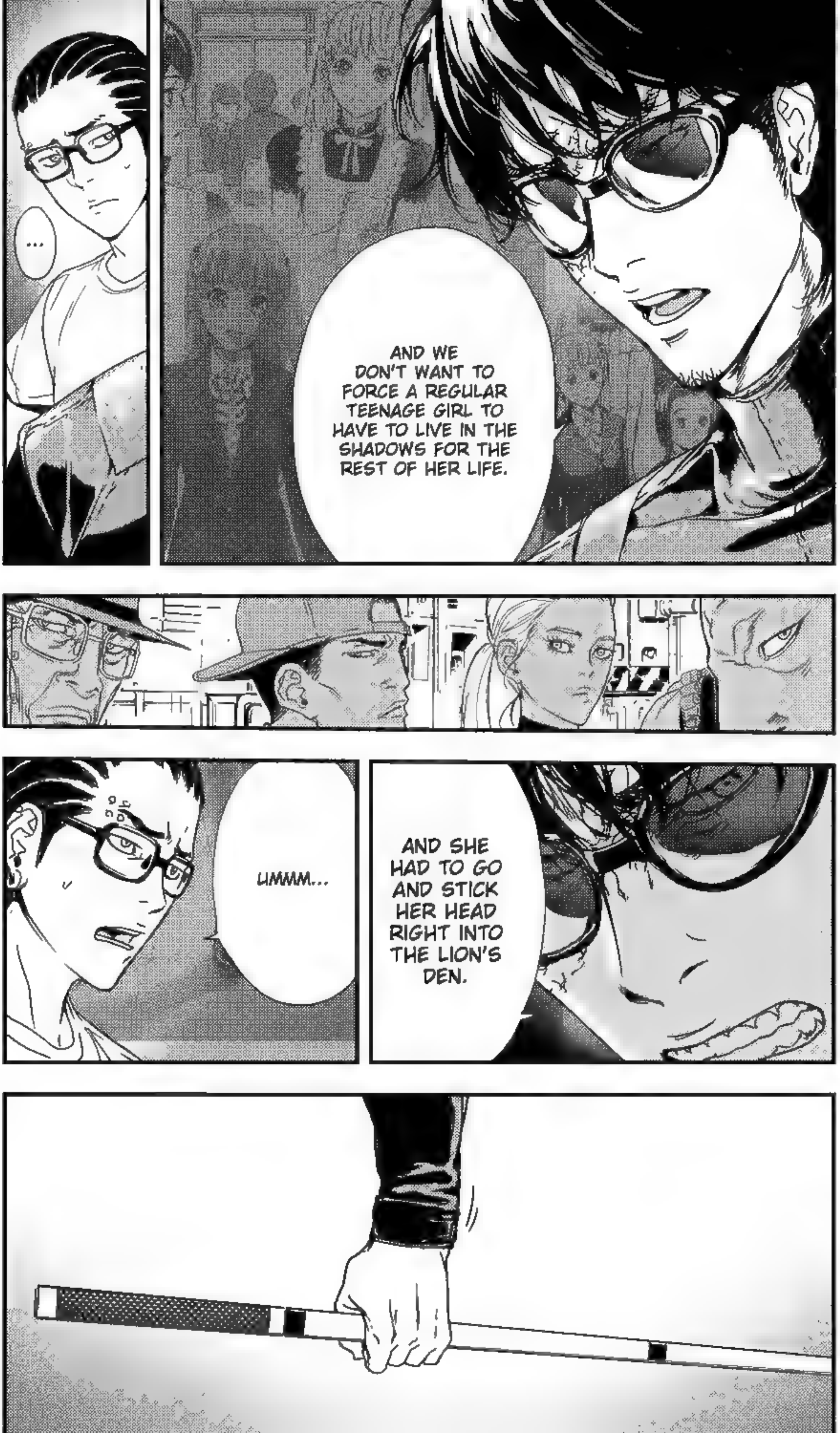

SO SINCE JESUS MANAGED TO FIGHT TO A DRAW, DOES THAT MAKE HIM TOUGHER THAN YOU?
NAH.
NOPE. EVEN TAKING ALL POSSIBLE IDEAS INTO ACCOUNT...
...I'M JUST SHORT OF BEATING ZASHID.
SO IF YOU FOUGHT HEAD-TO-HEAD, YOU'D WIN?
YES.
AND NO.
I HAVE CONFIDENCE THAT I WOULD WIN! BUT HE'S A MAN WHO CAN'T BE MEASURED ON A SCALE OF "STRONG" TO "WEAK."
PERHAPS I SHOULD JUST SAY THAT HIS SURVIVAL INSTINCTS ARE COMPLETELY OFF THE CHARTS.
??

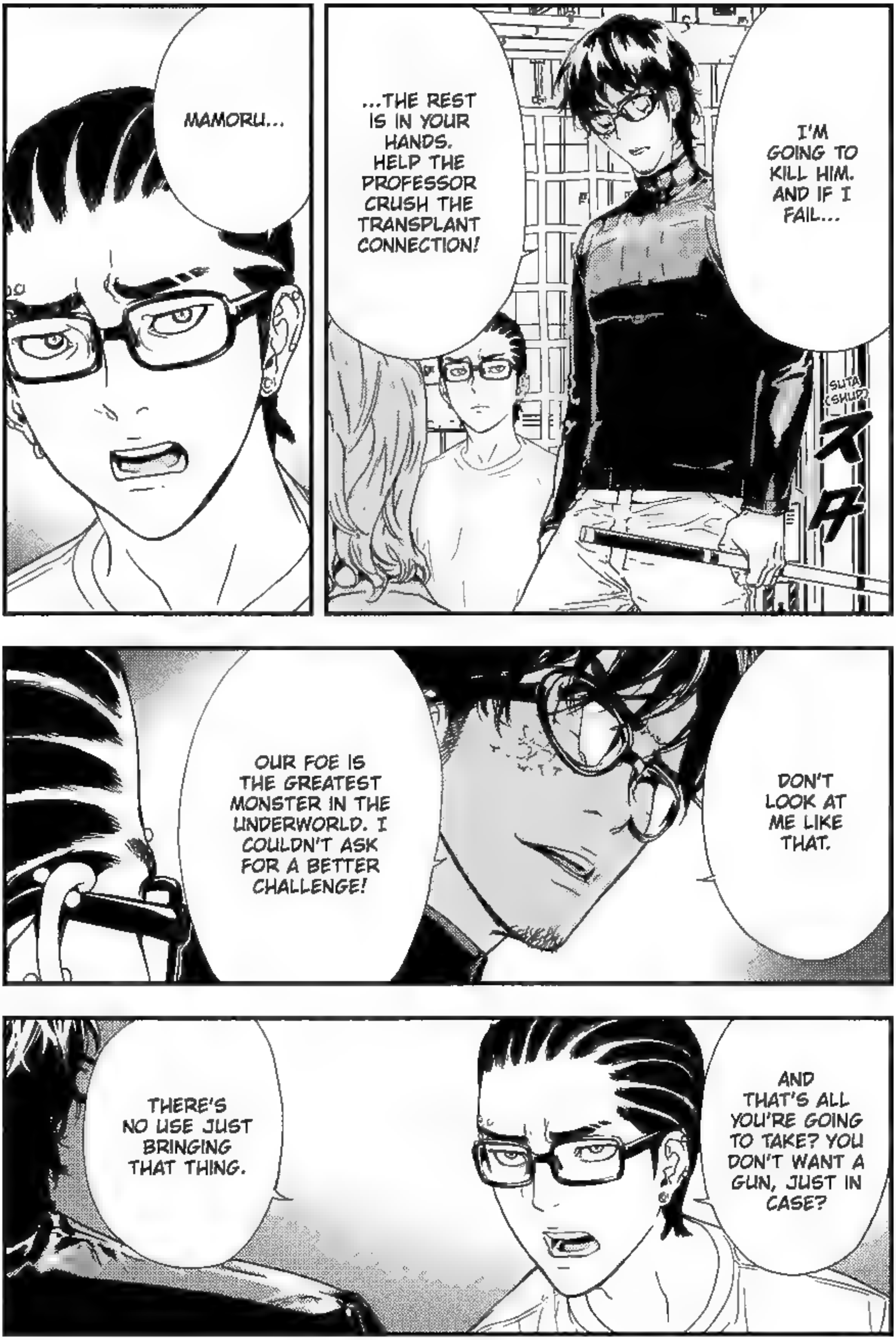

THERE'S SOMETHING IMMEASURABLE WITHIN HIM—AND THAT'S NOT EVEN INCLUDING HIS LUCK.
AS A MEASURE OF THAT, JUST LOOK AT THE FACT THAT HE CHALLENGED ZASHID HEAD-ON AND STILL LIVES.
THEREFORE, IF WE FOUGHT, THE POSSIBILITY REMAINS THAT IT MIGHT BE JESUS STANDING AT THE END.
BUT ANYWAY, THERE'S BASICALLY NO CHANCE OF VICTORY FOR ANYONE FIGHTING ZASHID HEAD-TO-HEAD.
...
IF YOU GO OFF AND GET KILLED, THEN YOU GET TO BE THE ETERNAL WINNER!!
SCREW THAT!!
I AIN'T GONNA LET THAT SLIDE, NOT AFTER ALL THE TIMES YOU BEAT ME!

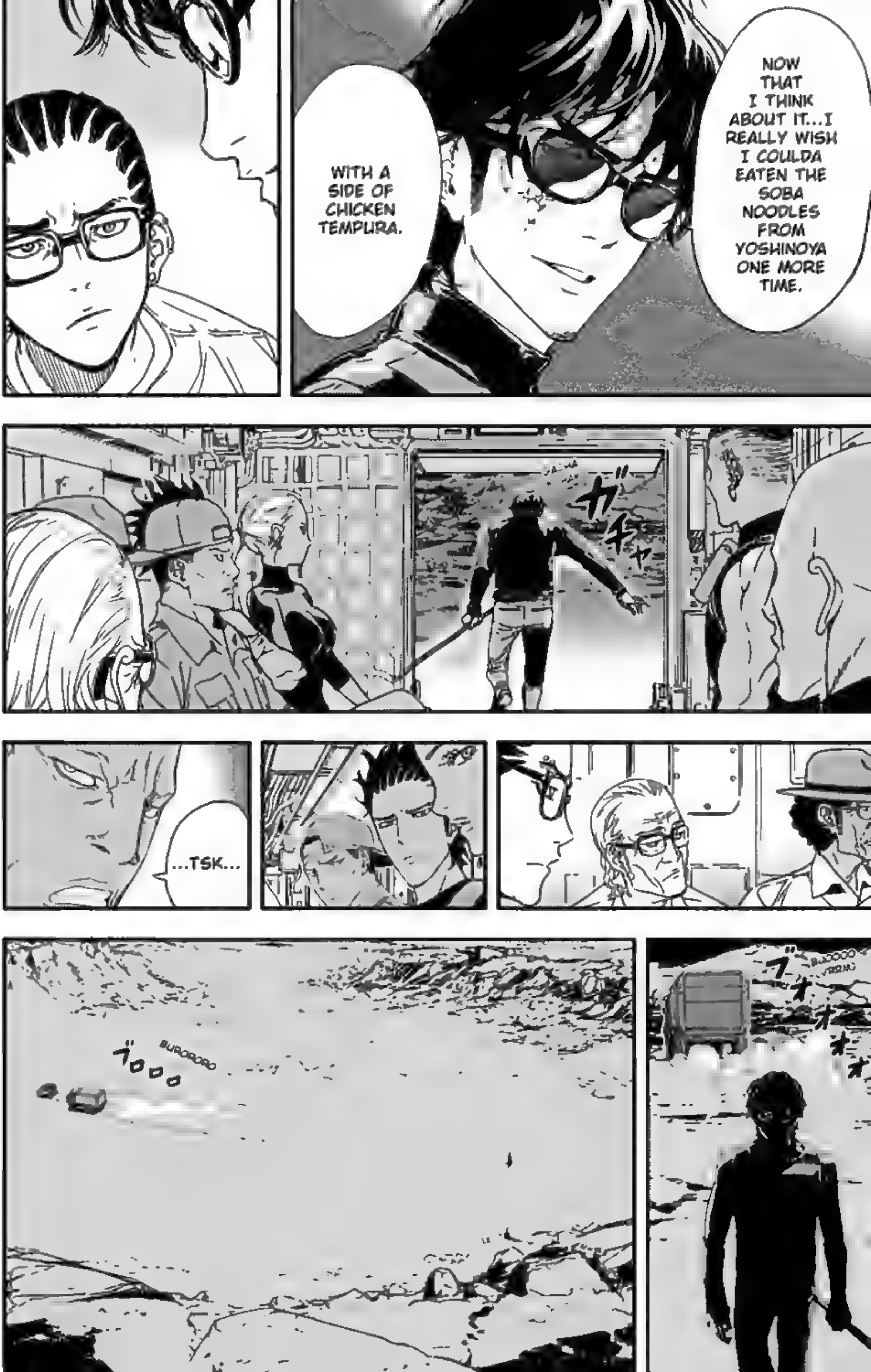

YOU HAVE TO COME BACK ALIVE, SO I CAN CRUSH YOU AT LAST!
...
WHOA, MAN...
UH-HUH...
I OPPOSED IT FOR THE MERITS OF OUR PLAN...
HMM !?
...BUT TO BE TOTALLY HONEST, I WANT TO KNOW!
I WANT TO KNOW HOW YOU, THE GREATEST OF NORMAL MEN, CAN DEFEAT A SUPERHUMAN LIKE HIM!
I WANT TO KNOW WHAT SORT OF TECHNIQUE YOU PLAN TO USE TO DEFEAT HIM!

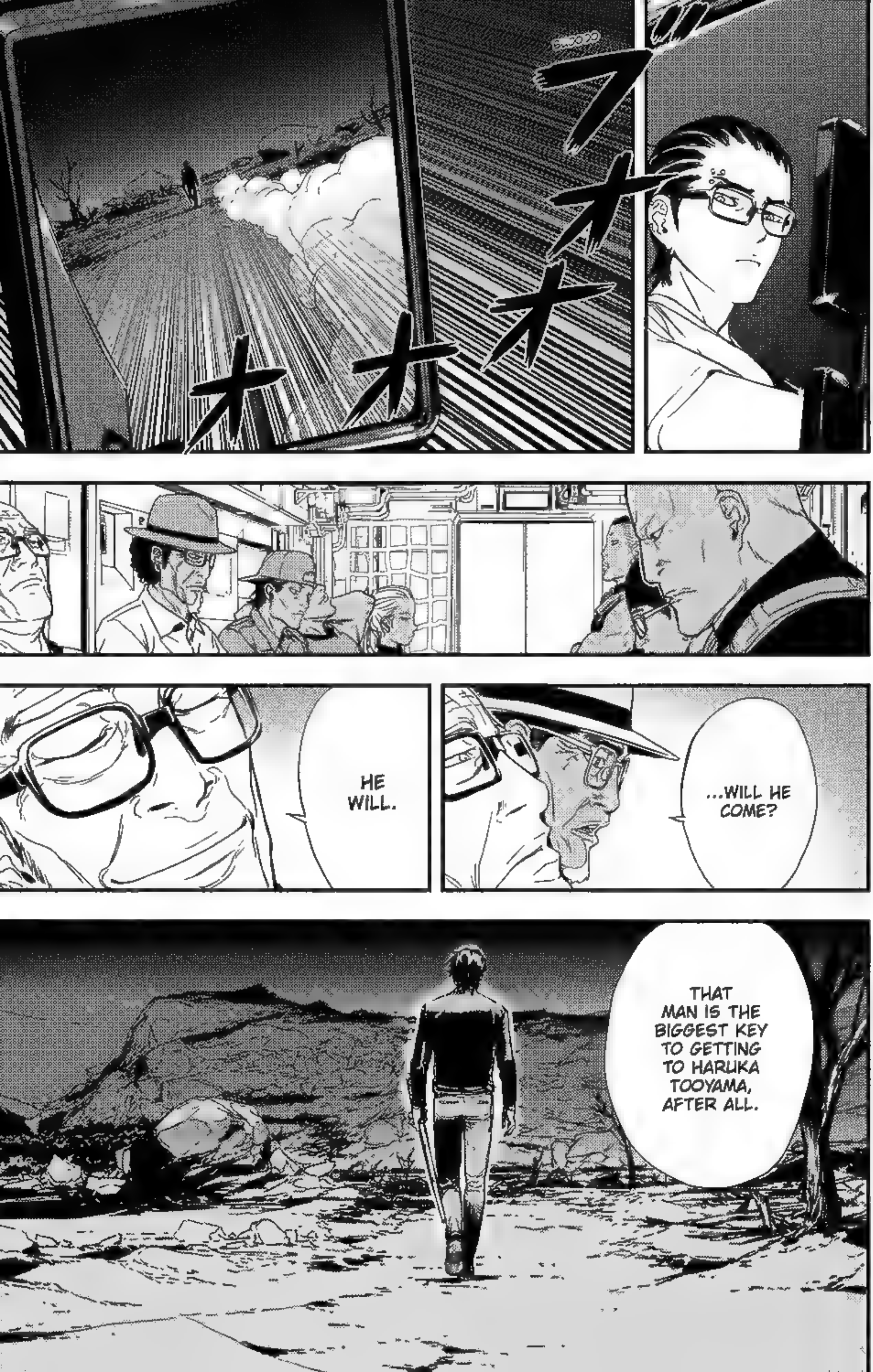

IF I MISS THIS OPPORTUNITY TO KNOW, THEN I WILL HAVE EARNED NOTHING FROM YOUR RETURN.
...
ALL RIGHT, FINE. I SEE THAT YOU'RE SERIOUS ABOUT THIS.
BUT I DOUBT I'M GOING TO LIVE UP TO YOUR EXPECTATIONS.
THERE ARE ONLY TWO IDEAS I HAVE TO COUNTERACT ZASHID.

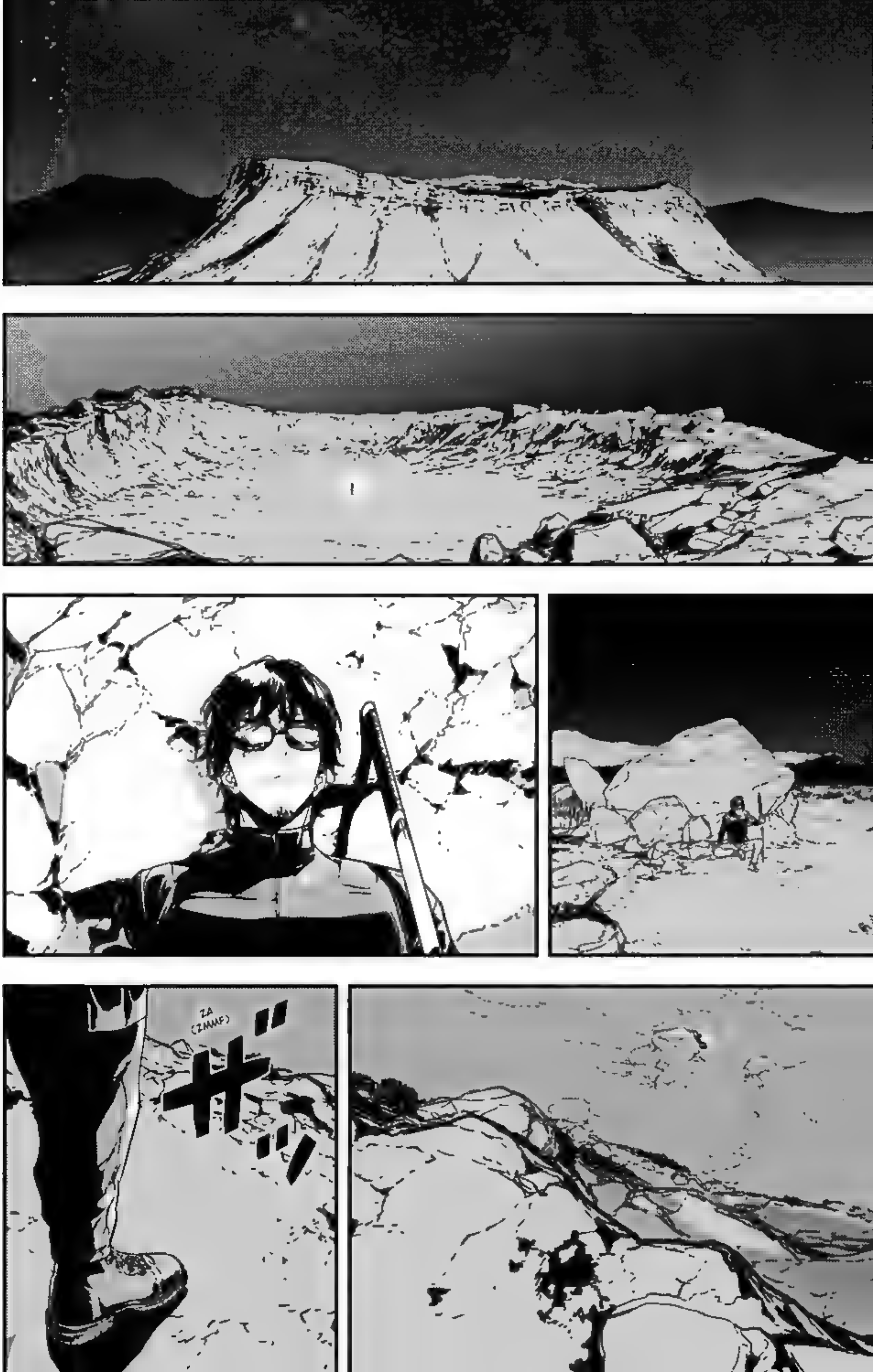

…
…
…I DON'T GET IT…
WHY WOULD YOU GO TO SUCH LENGTHS FOR A TOTAL STRANGER OF A GIRL?
THE WORLD'S A HUGE PLACE.
WHY CAN'T SHE JUST KEEP HER HEAD DOWN AND LIVE QUIETLY SOMEWHERE ELSE?
IS IT REALLY NECESSARY TO SACRIFICE SO MUCH JUST TO GAIN AN ORDINARY FUTURE?
BECAUSE IT'S ZASHID THAT HARUKA HAS HER SIGHTS ON.
THAT MONSTER MIGHT AS WELL BE THE PINNACLE OF HUMANITY. IF I CAN BEAT HIM, IT WILL MEAN MY SWORD MASTERY IS FINALLY COMPLETE.

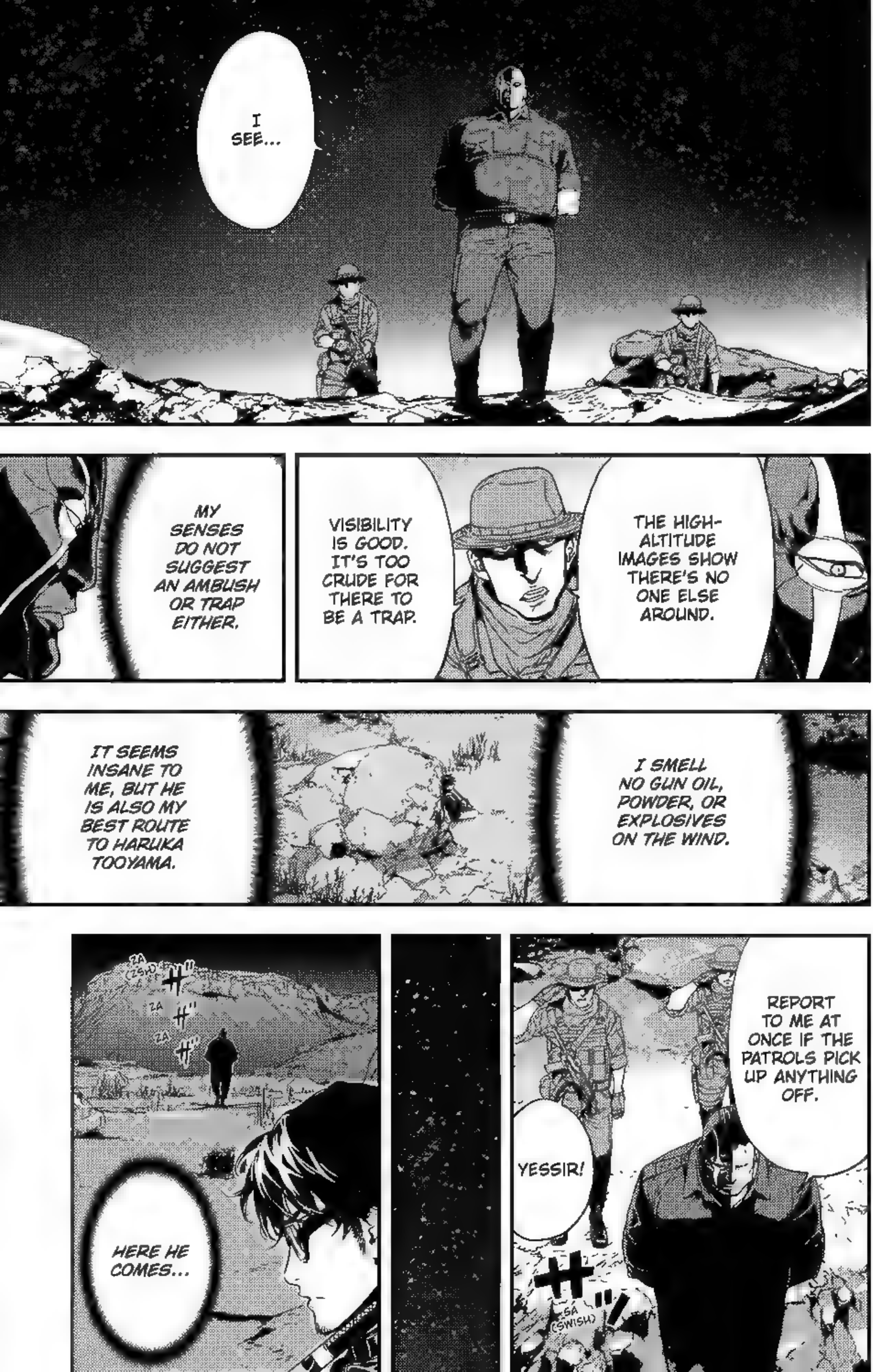

AND WE DON'T WANT TO FORCE A REGULAR TEENAGE GIRL TO HAVE TO LIVE IN THE SHADOWS FOR THE REST OF HER LIFE.
...
AND SHE HAD TO GO AND STICK HER HEAD RIGHT INTO THE LION'S DEN.
UMMM...

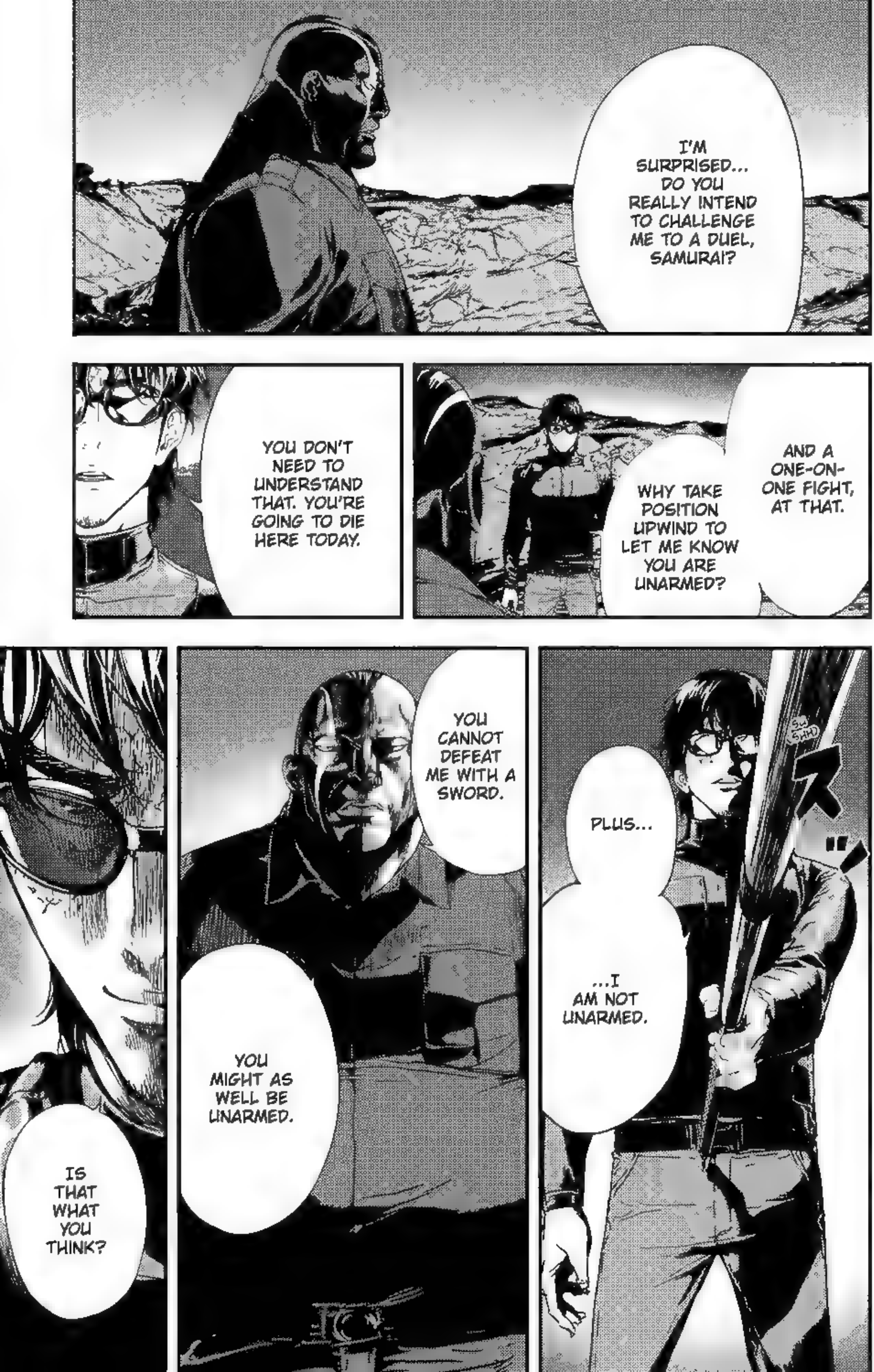

I'M GOING TO KILL HIM. AND IF I FAIL...
...THE REST IS IN YOUR HANDS. HELP THE PROFESSOR CRUSH THE TRANSPLANT CONNECTION!
SUTA (SHUP)
スタ
MAMORU...
DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT.
OUR FOE IS THE GREATEST MONSTER IN THE UNDERWORLD. I COULDN'T ASK FOR A BETTER CHALLENGE!
AND THAT'S ALL YOU'RE GOING TO TAKE? YOU DON'T WANT A GUN, JUST IN CASE?
THERE'S NO USE JUST BRINGING THAT THING.

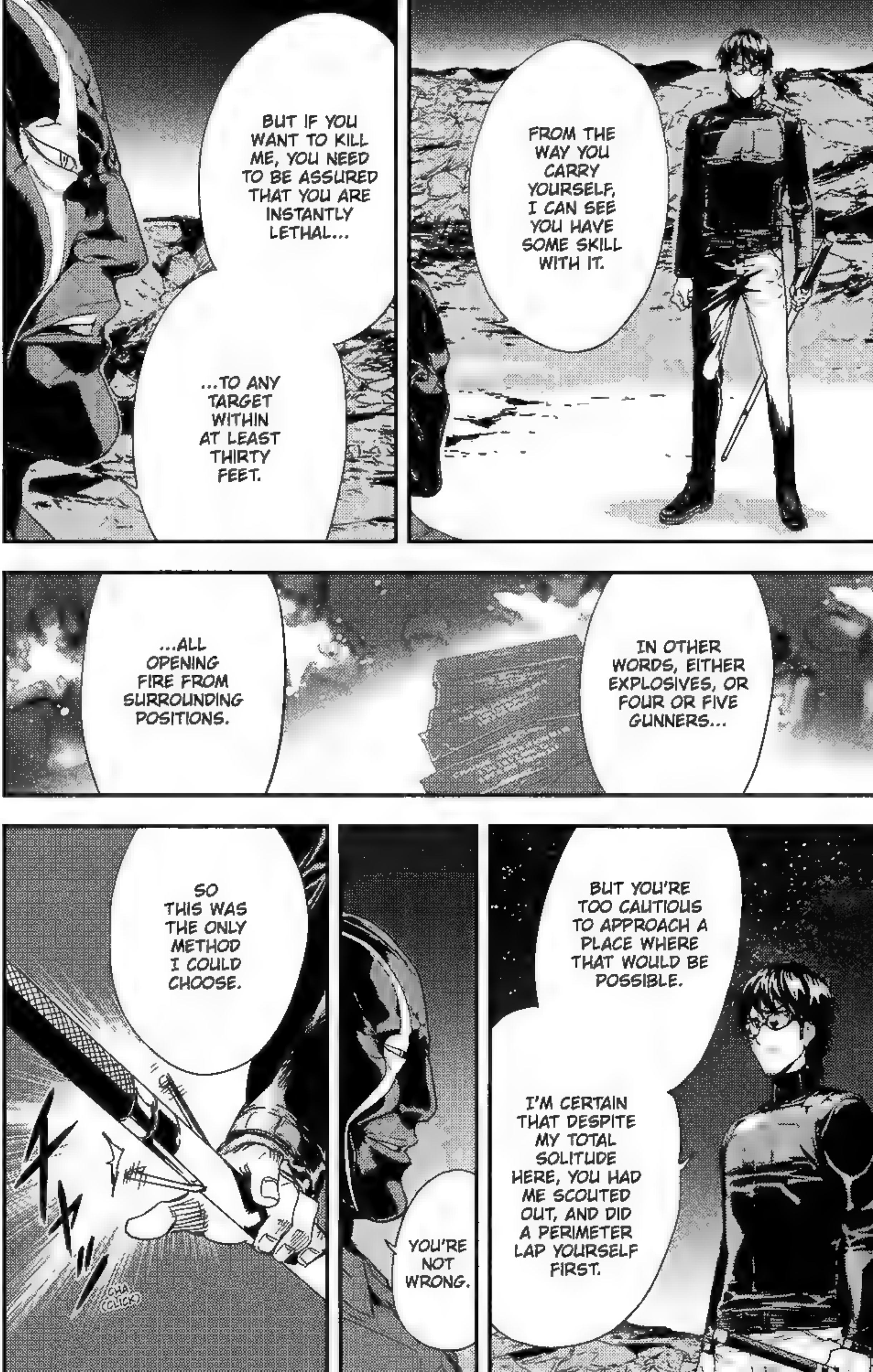

NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT...I REALLY WISH I COULDA EATEN THE SOBA NOODLES FROM YOSHINOYA ONE MORE TIME.
WITH A SIDE OF CHICKEN TEMPURA.
ガチャ
GACHA
...TSK...
ブオオオオ
BUOOOO VROOM
ブロロロ
BURORORO

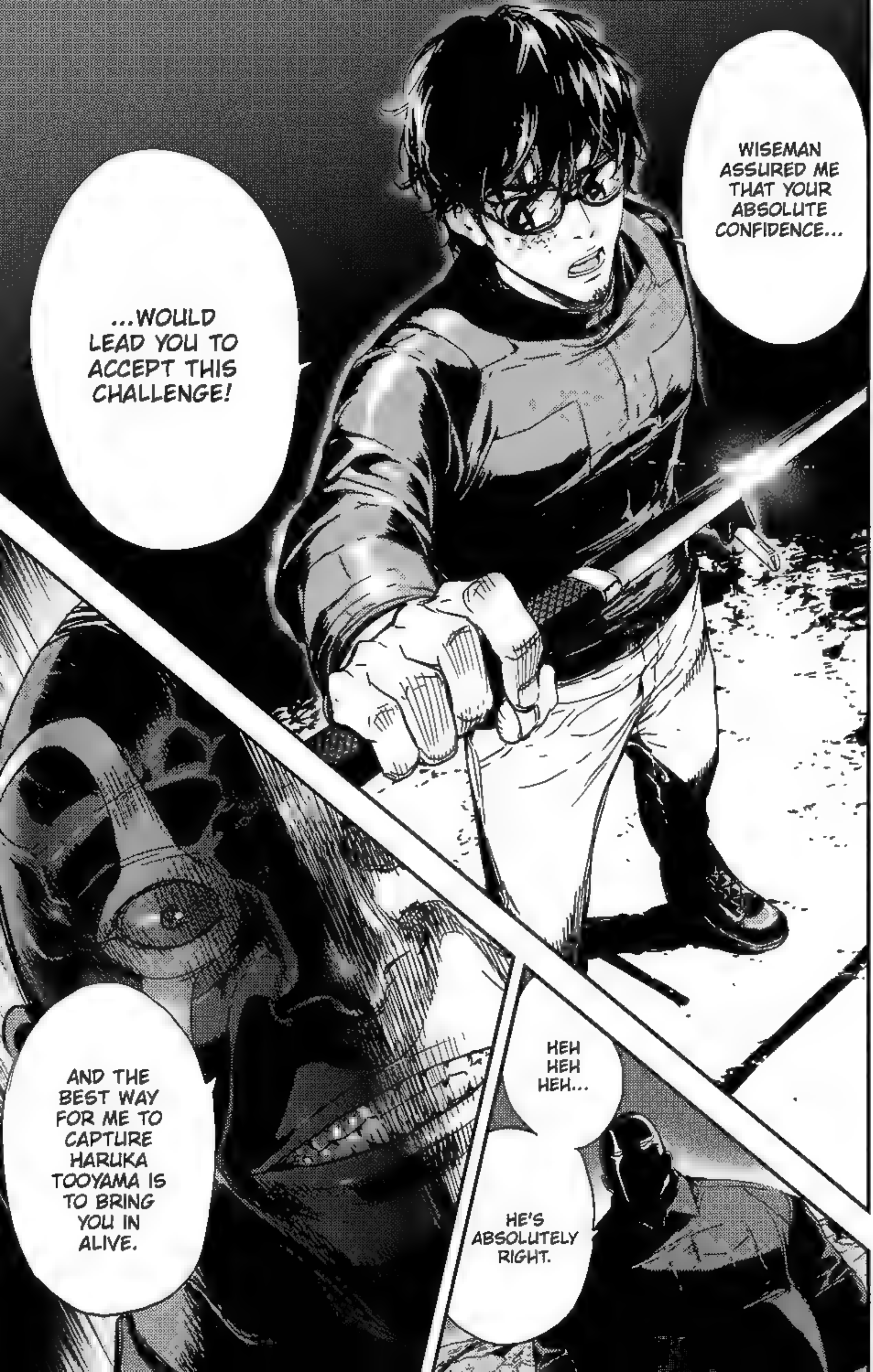

ブオオオオ
...WILL HE COME?
HE WILL.
THAT MAN IS THE BIGGEST KEY TO GETTING TO HARUKA TOOYAMA, AFTER ALL.

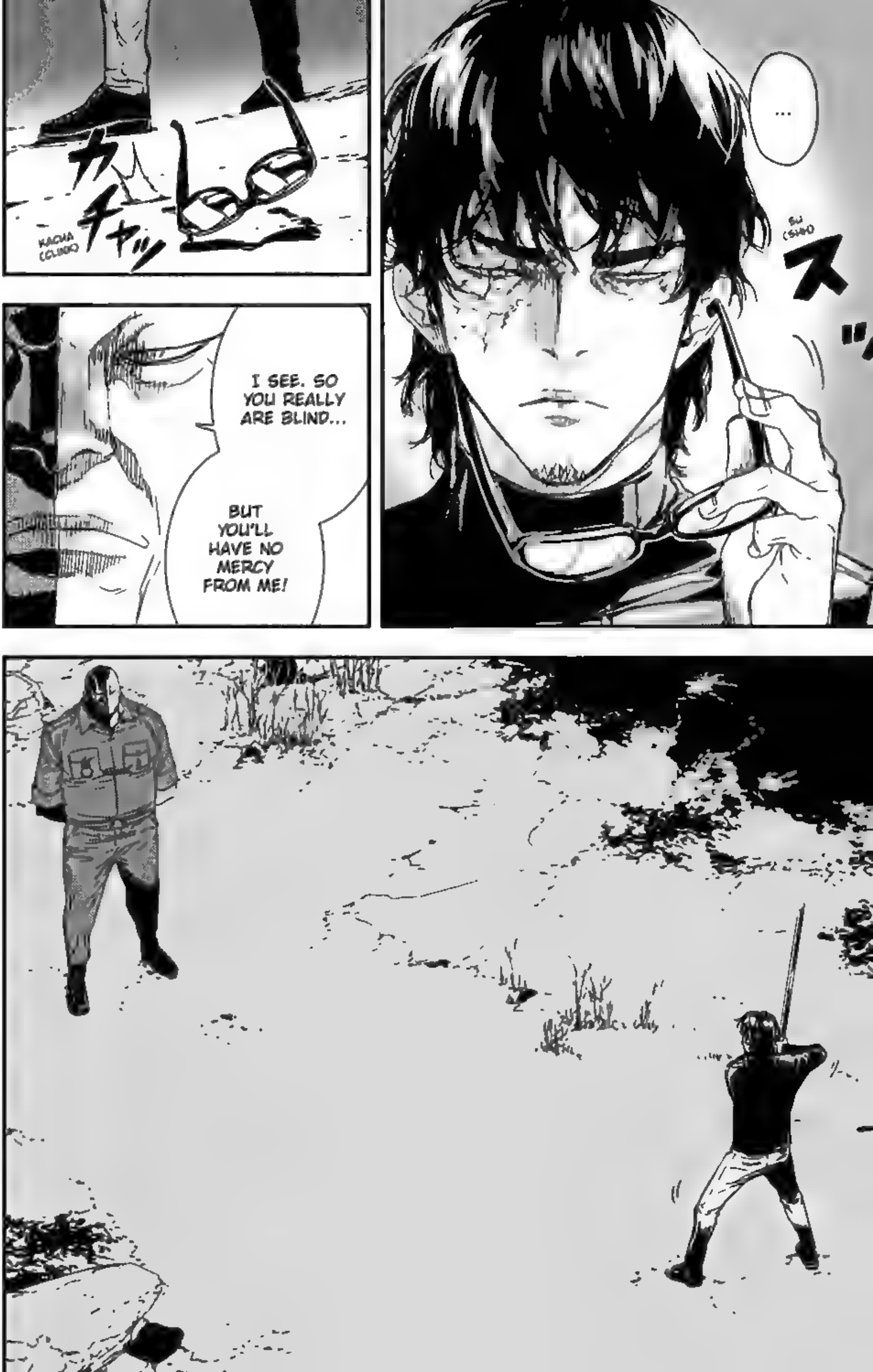

ザッ
ZA
(ZAMF)

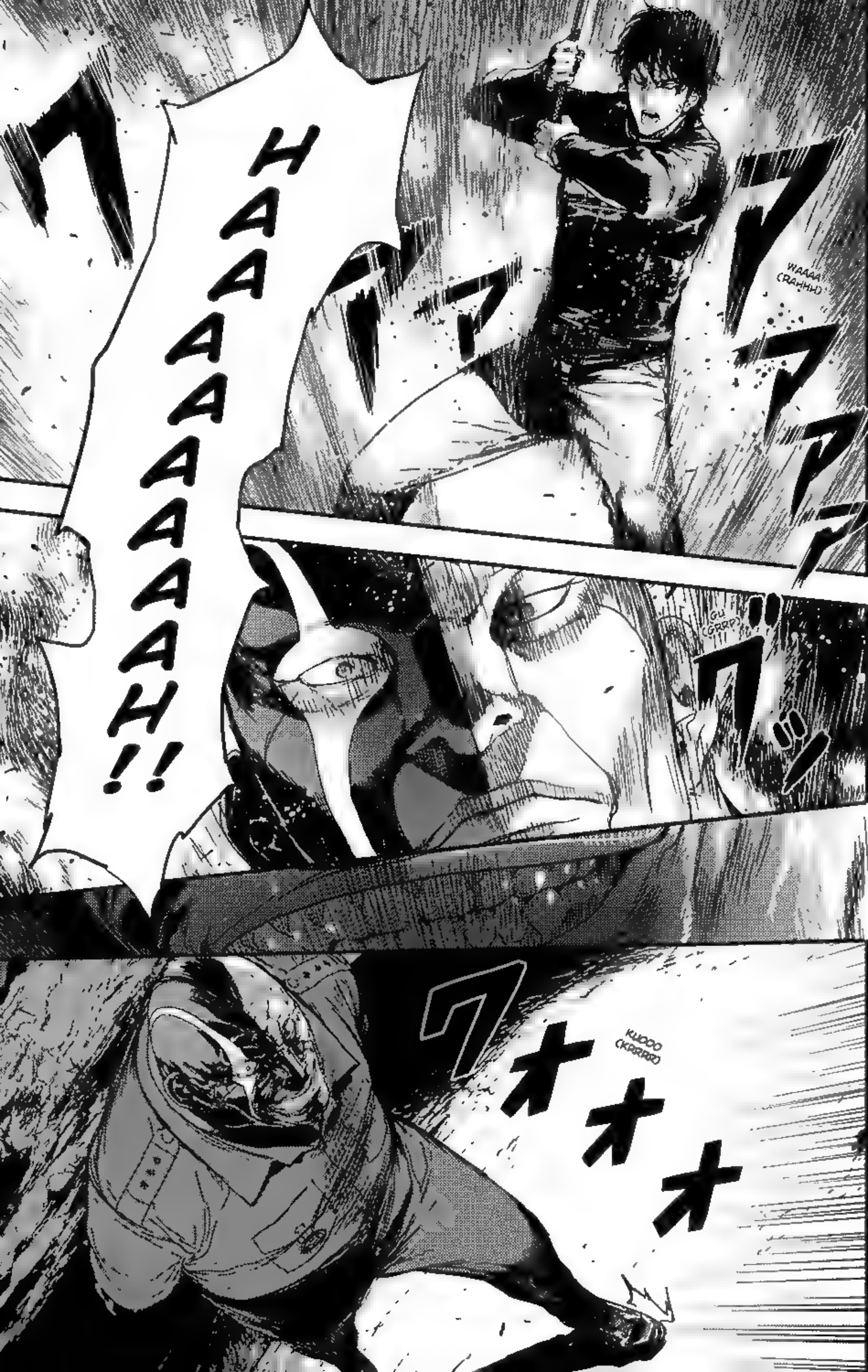

I SEE...
THE HIGH-ALTITUDE IMAGES SHOW THERE'S NO ONE ELSE AROUND.
VISIBILITY IS GOOD. IT'S TOO CRUDE FOR THERE TO BE A TRAP.
MY SENSES DO NOT SUGGEST AN AMBUSH OR TRAP EITHER.
I SMELL NO GUN OIL, POWDER, OR EXPLOSIVES ON THE WIND.
IT SEEMS INSANE TO ME, BUT HE IS ALSO MY BEST ROUTE TO HARUKA TOOYAMA.
REPORT TO ME AT ONCE IF THE PATROLS PICK UP ANYTHING OFF.
YESSIR!
SA (SWISH)
ZA (ZSH)
ZA
ZA
HERE HE COMES...

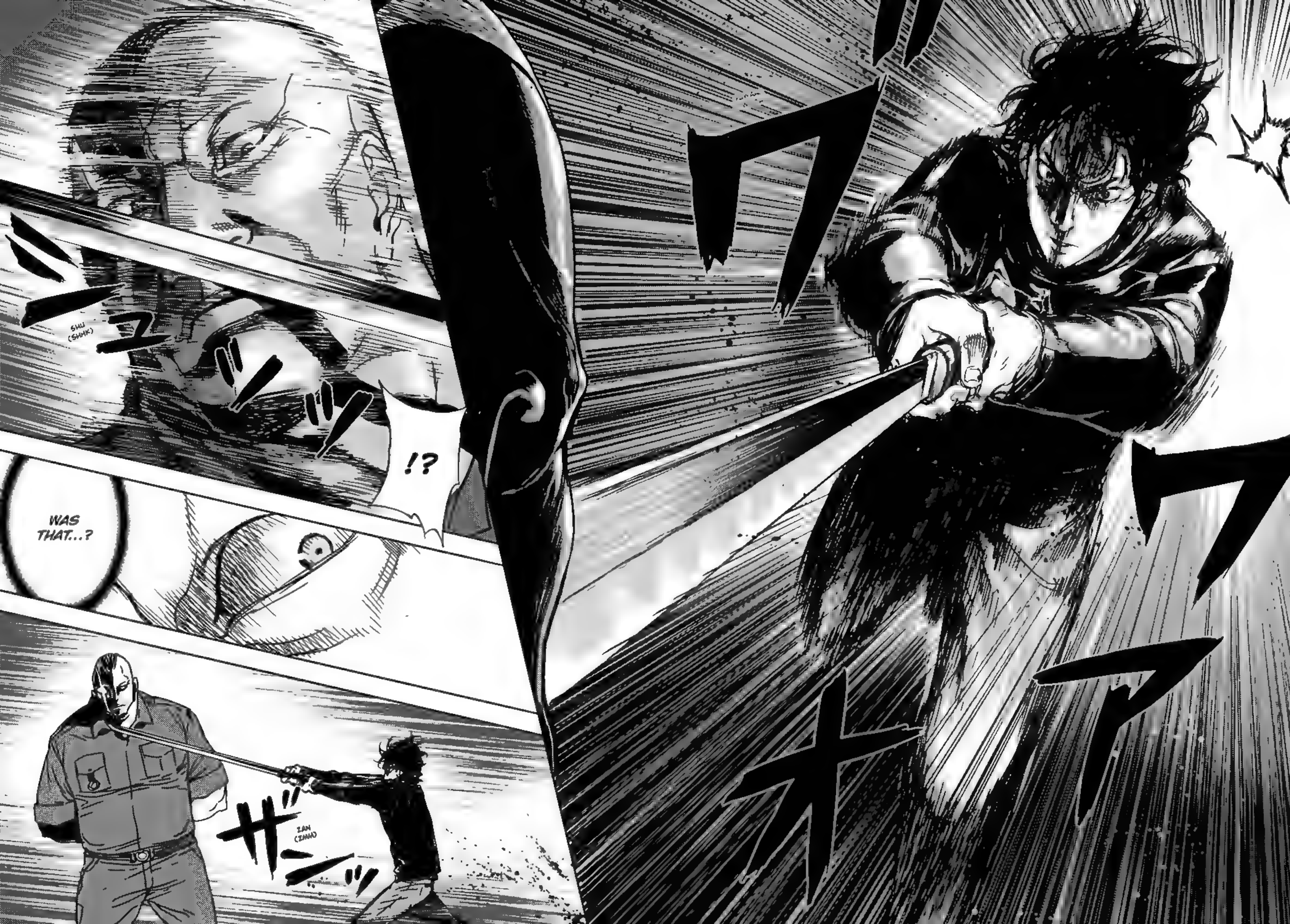

I'M SURPRISED... DO YOU REALLY INTEND TO CHALLENGE ME TO A DUEL, SAMURAI?
AND A ONE-ON-ONE FIGHT, AT THAT.
WHY TAKE POSITION UPWIND TO LET ME KNOW YOU ARE UNARMED?
YOU DON'T NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT. YOU'RE GOING TO DIE HERE TODAY.
SWSHH
PLUS...
...I AM NOT UNARMED.
YOU CANNOT DEFEAT ME WITH A SWORD.
YOU MIGHT AS WELL BE UNARMED.
IS THAT WHAT YOU THINK?


FROM THE WAY YOU CARRY YOURSELF, I CAN SEE YOU HAVE SOME SKILL WITH IT.
BUT IF YOU WANT TO KILL ME, YOU NEED TO BE ASSURED THAT YOU ARE INSTANTLY LETHAL...
...TO ANY TARGET WITHIN AT LEAST THIRTY FEET.
IN OTHER WORDS, EITHER EXPLOSIVES, OR FOUR OR FIVE GUNNERS...
...ALL OPENING FIRE FROM SURROUNDING POSITIONS.
BUT YOU'RE TOO CAUTIOUS TO APPROACH A PLACE WHERE THAT WOULD BE POSSIBLE.
I'M CERTAIN THAT DESPITE MY TOTAL SOLITUDE HERE, YOU HAD ME SCOUTED OUT, AND DID A PERIMETER LAP YOURSELF FIRST.
YOU'RE NOT WRONG.
SO THIS WAS THE ONLY METHOD I COULD CHOOSE.
CHA (CLICK)

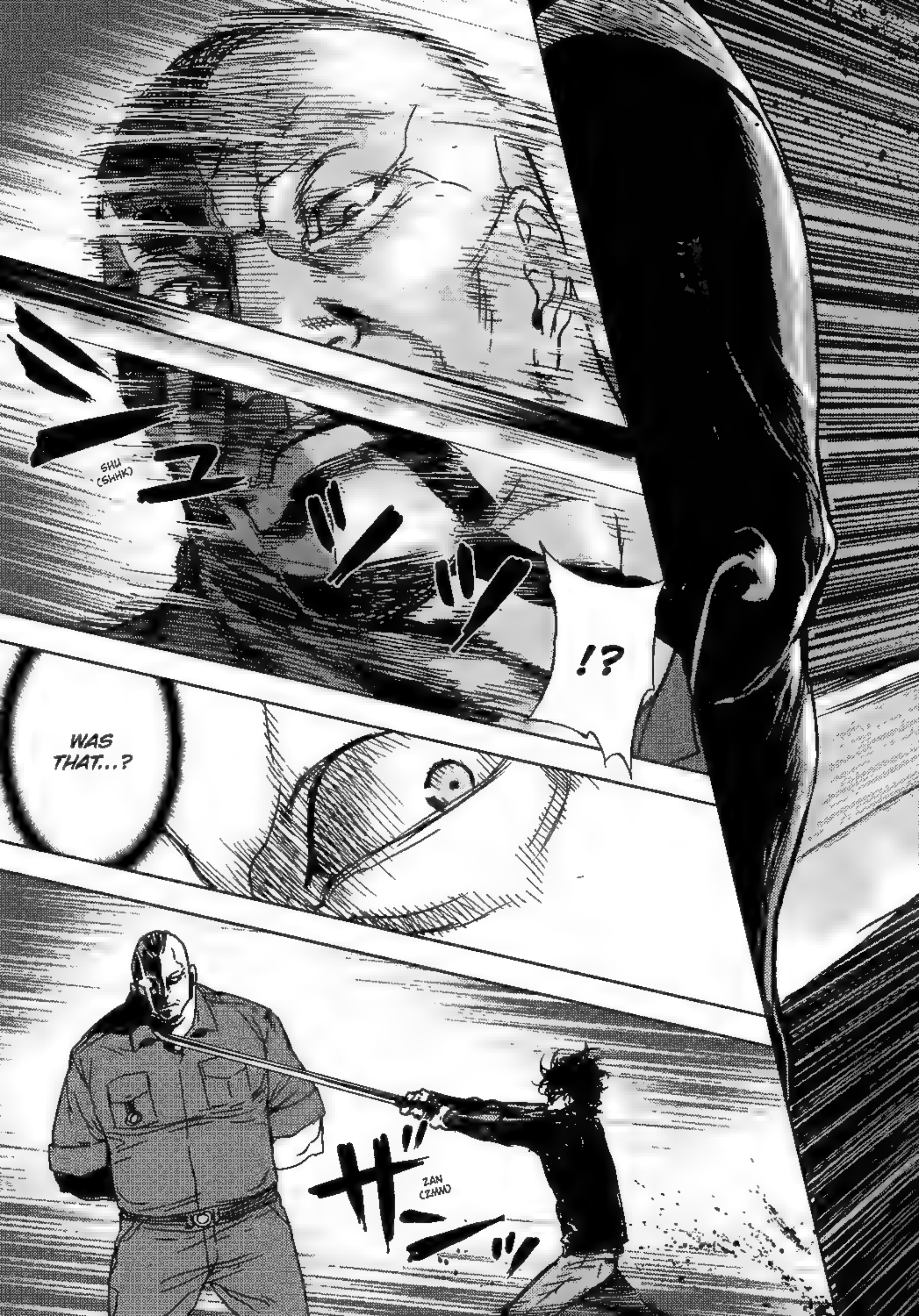

WISEMAN ASSURED ME THAT YOUR ABSOLUTE CONFIDENCE...
...WOULD LEAD YOU TO ACCEPT THIS CHALLENGE!
HEH HEH HEH...
HE'S ABSOLUTELY RIGHT.
AND THE BEST WAY FOR ME TO CAPTURE HARUKA TOOYAMA IS TO BRING YOU IN ALIVE.

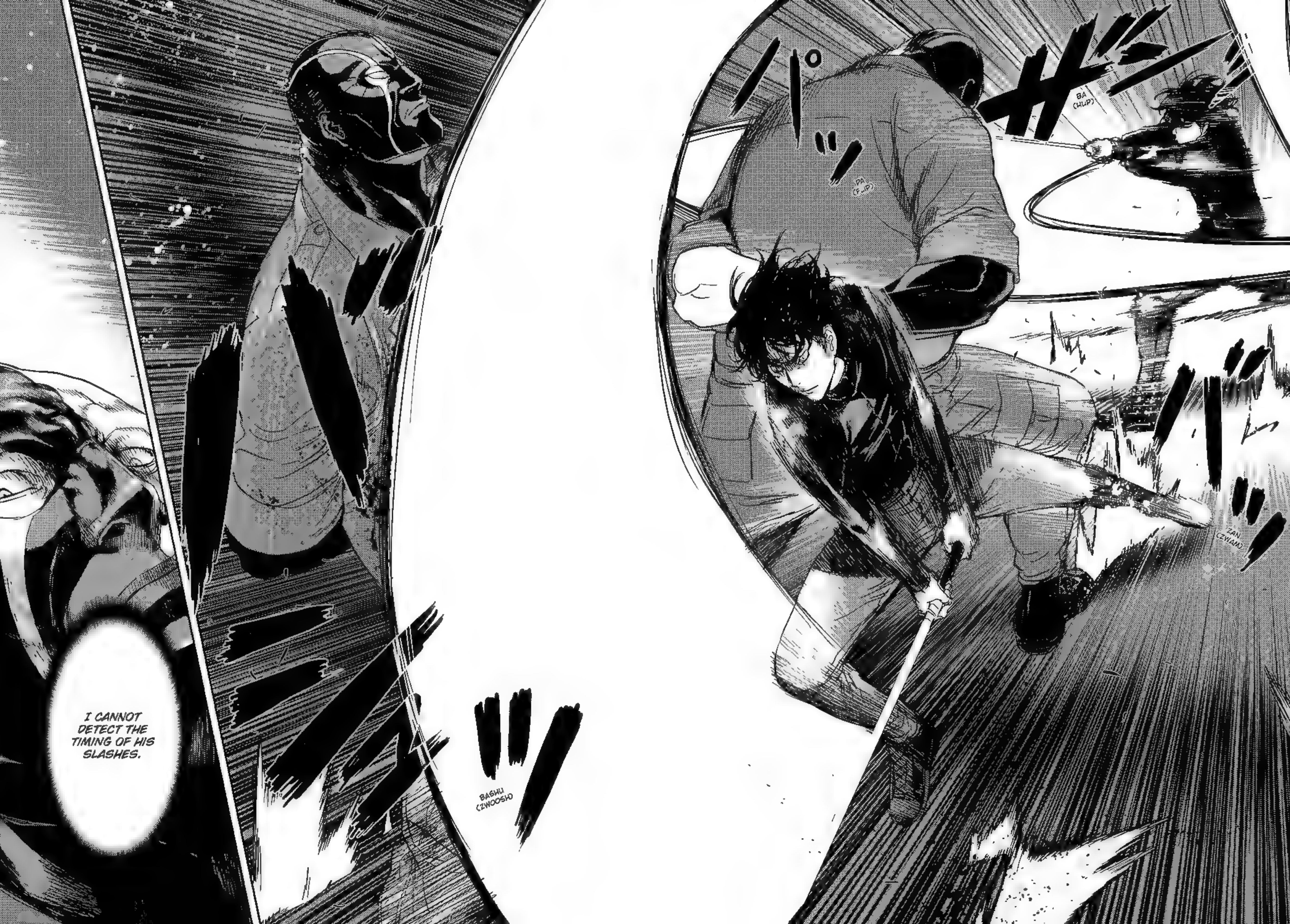

...
SU (SHIO)
ス
KACHA (CLINK)
カチャッ
I SEE. SO YOU REALLY ARE BLIND...
BUT YOU'LL HAVE NO MERCY FROM ME!


HAAAAAAAAAAH!!
ワァァァァァ
WAAAA (RAHHH)
グッ
GU (GRRP)
クオオオ
KUOOO (KRRRR)

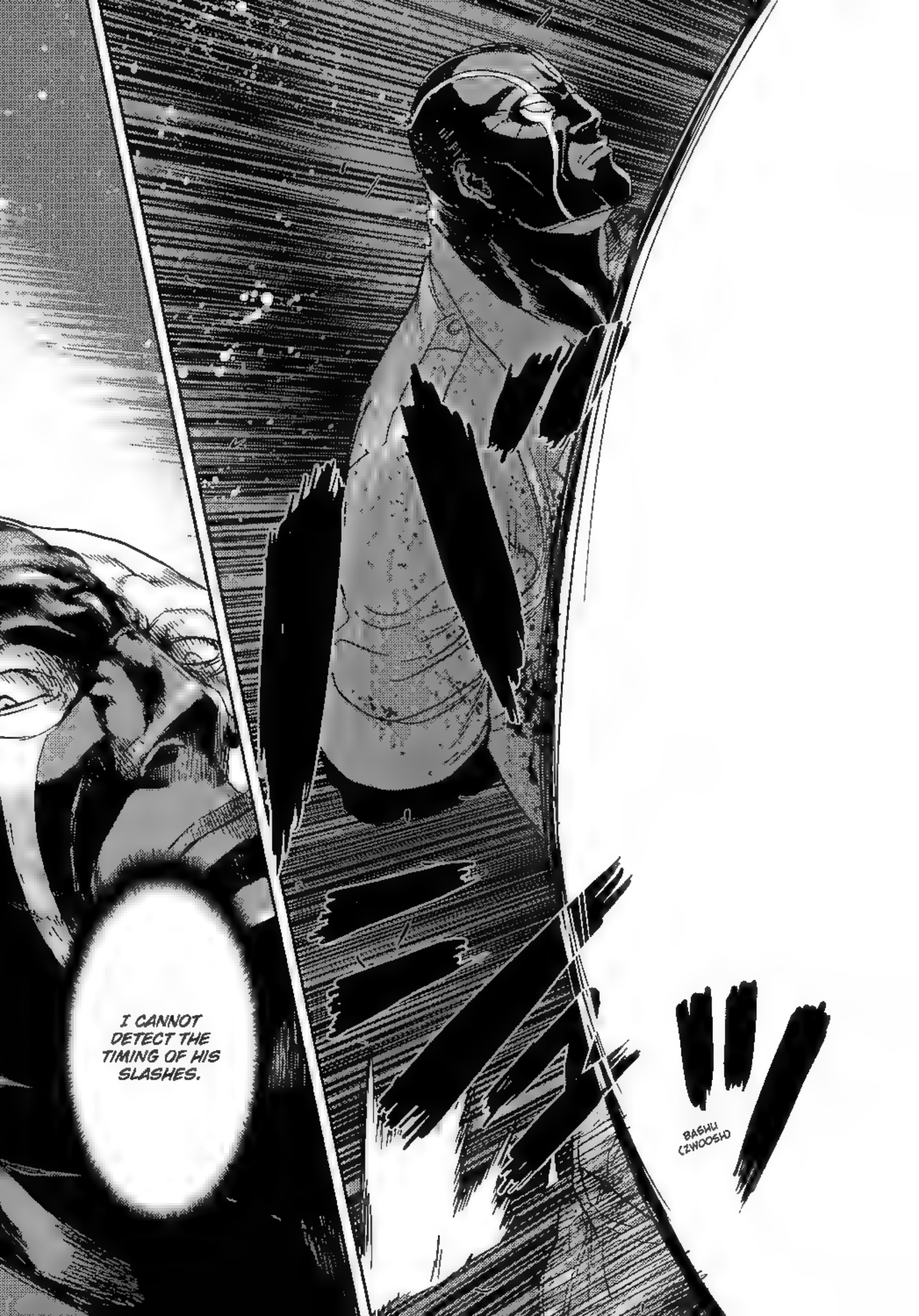

SHU
(SHHK)
!?
WAS THAT...?
ZAN
(ZMM)

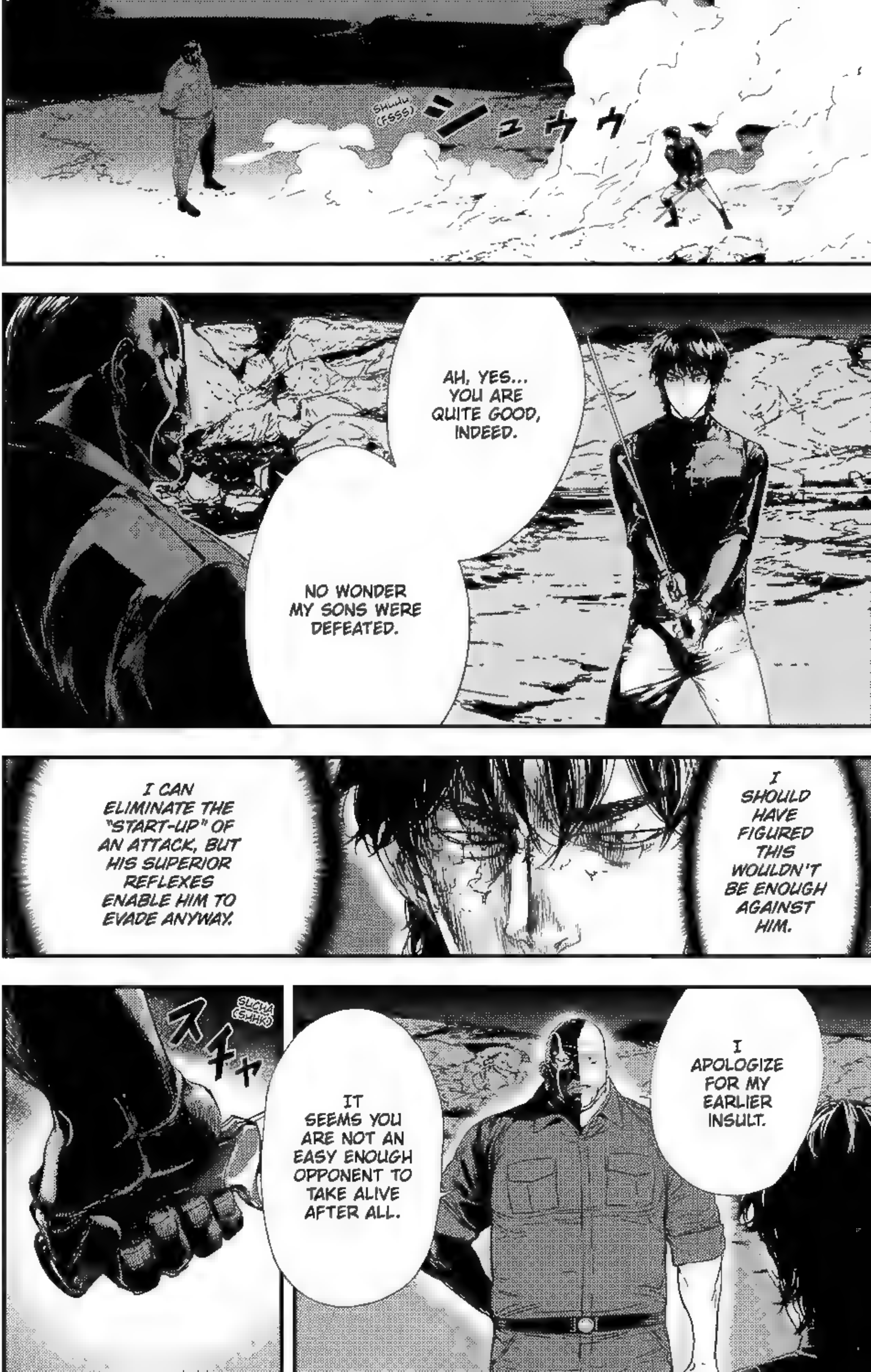
GWAAO
VWOOH

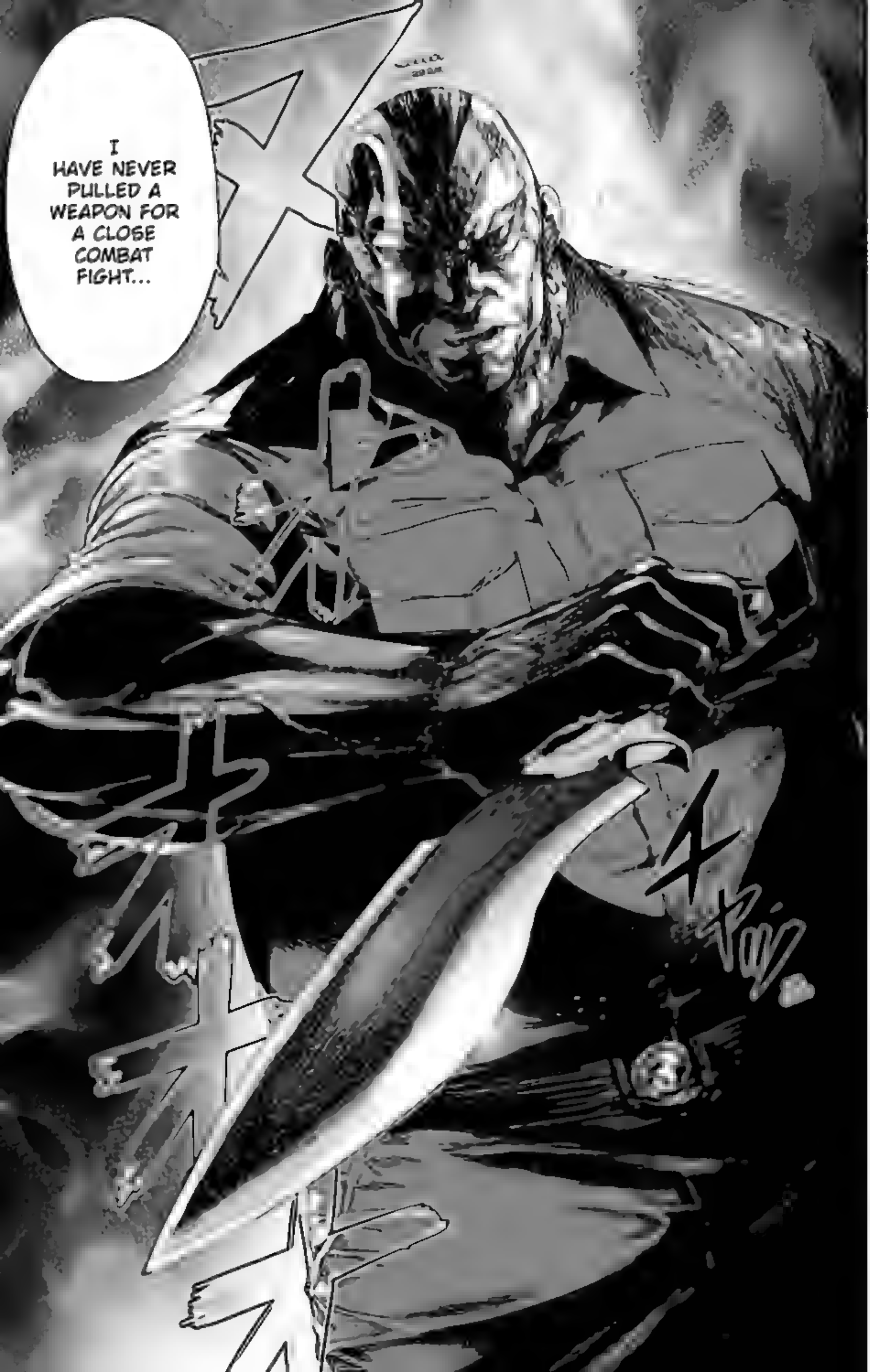

SHU (SHHK)
!?
WAS THAT...?
ZAN (ZHM)

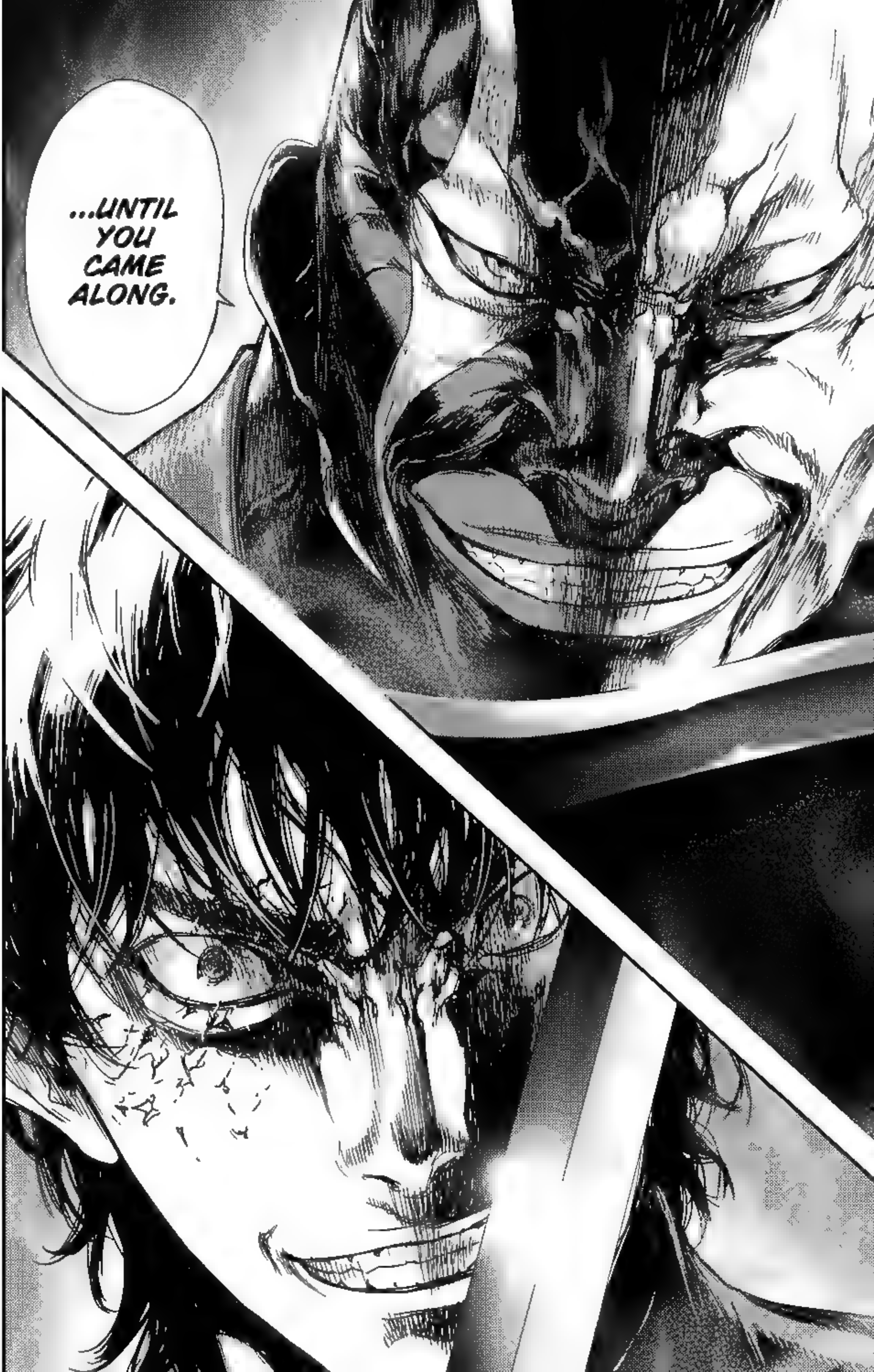

BA (HUP)
PA (F_IP)
ZAN (ZWAM)
BASHU (ZWOOSH)
I CANNOT DETECT THE TIMING OF HIS SLASHES.

パッ
ザザッ

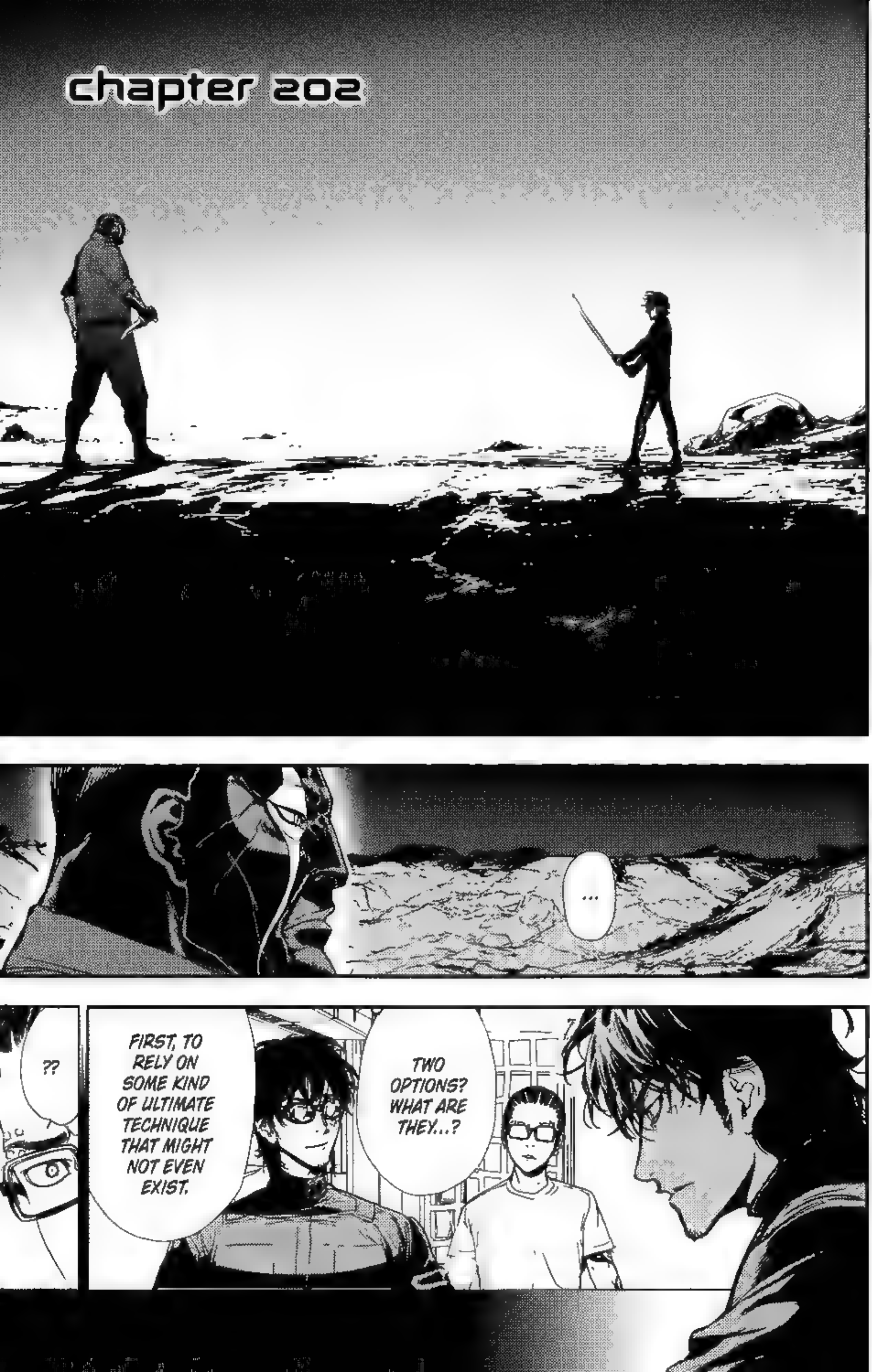

BASHU (ZWOOSH)
I CANNOT DETECT THE TIMING OF HIS SLASHES.

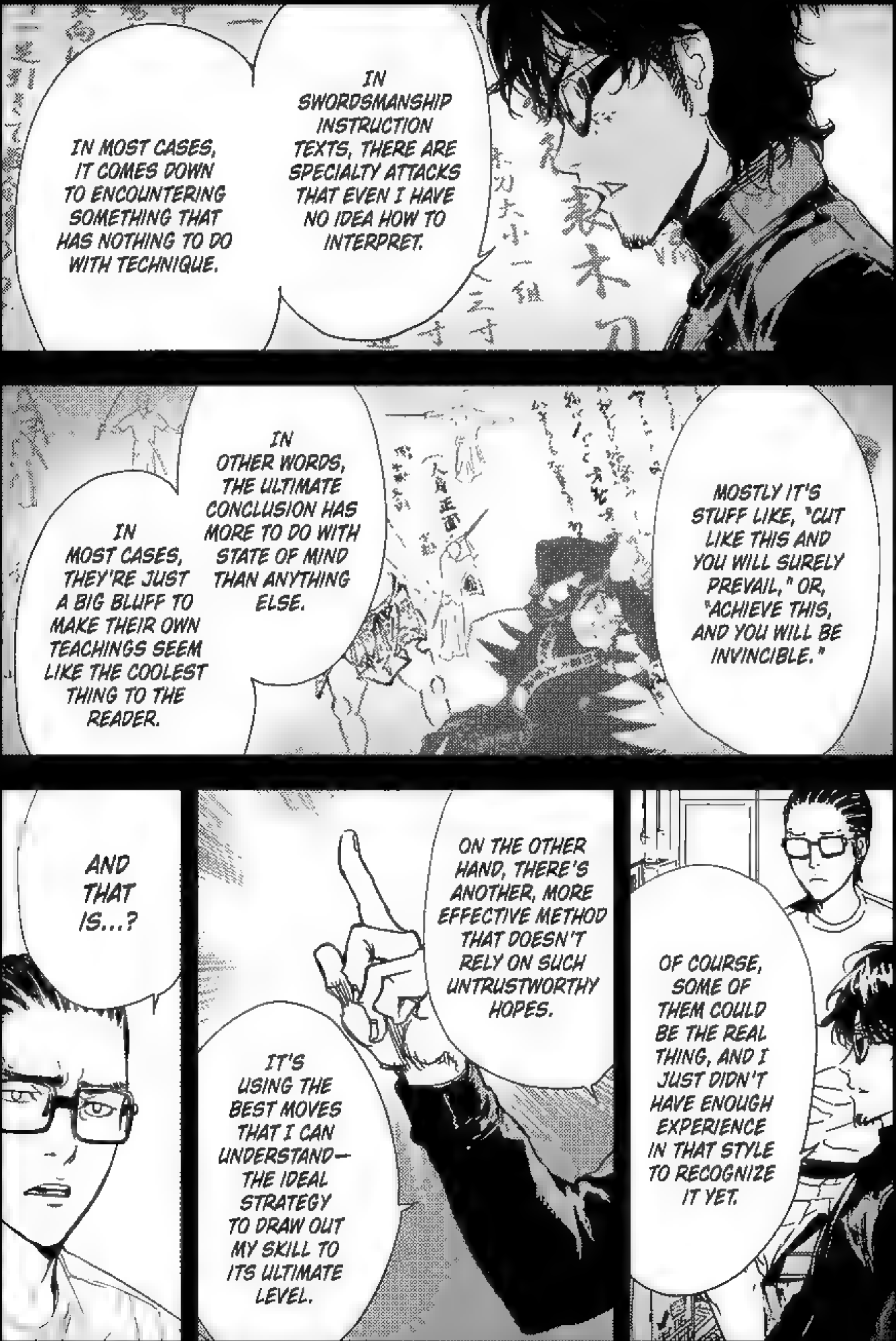

SHUUU (FSSS)
シュウウ
AH, YES... YOU ARE QUITE GOOD, INDEED.
NO WONDER MY SONS WERE DEFEATED.
I SHOULD HAVE FIGURED THIS WOULDN'T BE ENOUGH AGAINST HIM.
I CAN ELIMINATE THE "START-UP" OF AN ATTACK, BUT HIS SUPERIOR REFLEXES ENABLE HIM TO EVADE ANYWAY.
I APOLOGIZE FOR MY EARLIER INSULT.
IT SEEMS YOU ARE NOT AN EASY ENOUGH OPPONENT TO TAKE ALIVE AFTER ALL.
SUCHA (SHHK)
スチャ

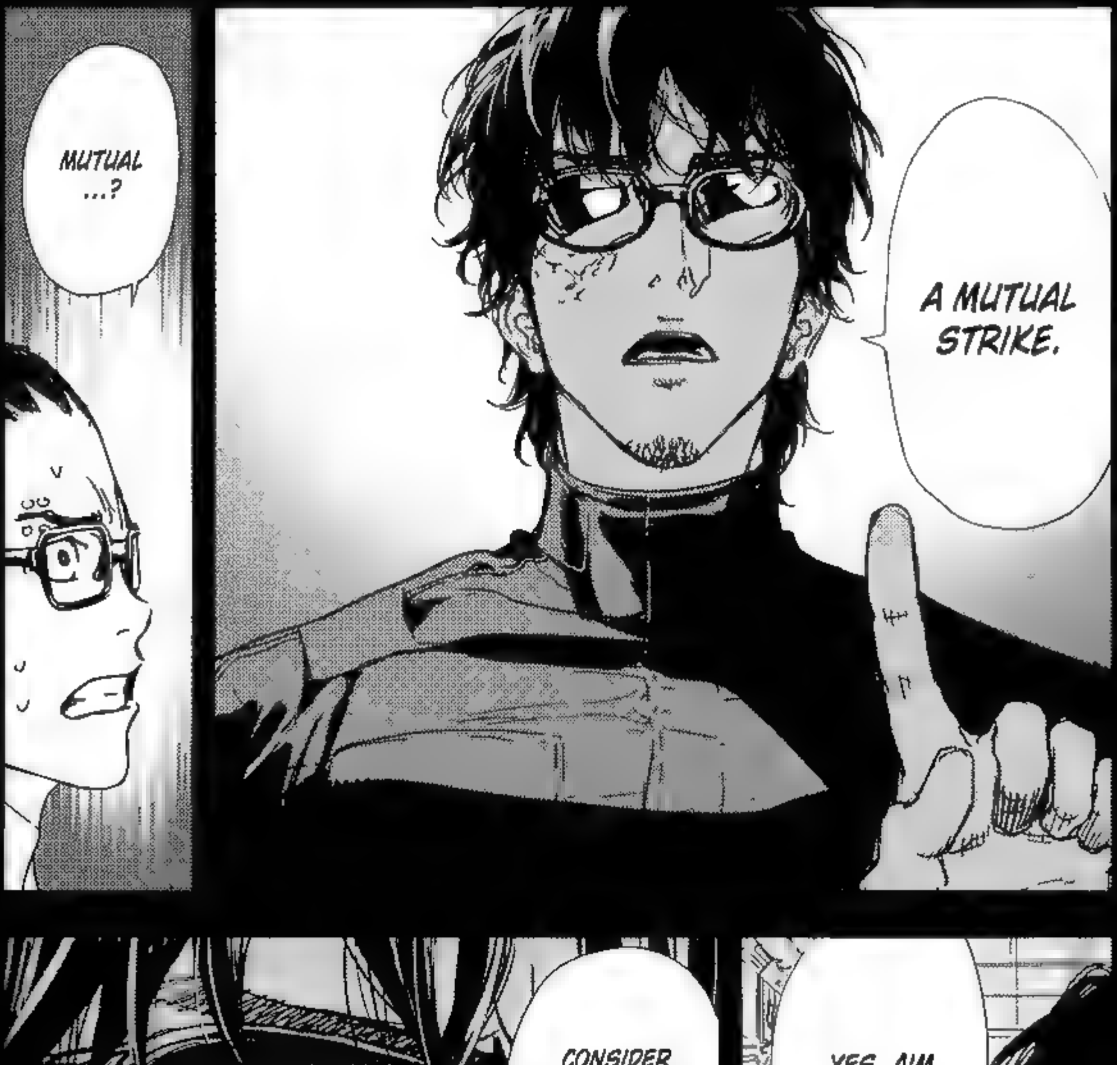

I HAVE NEVER PULLED A WEAPON FOR A CLOSE COMBAT FIGHT...

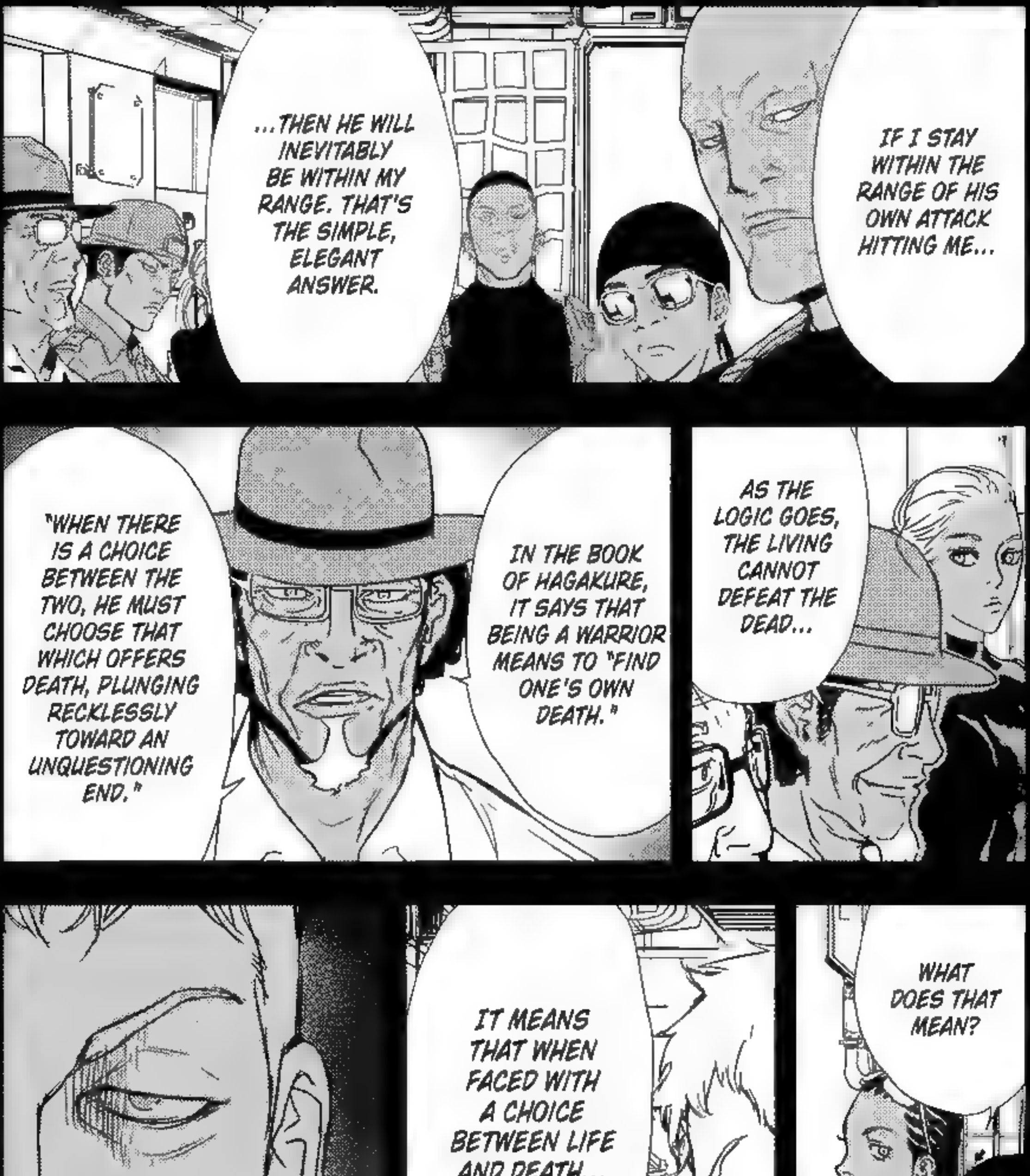

...UNTIL YOU CAME ALONG.

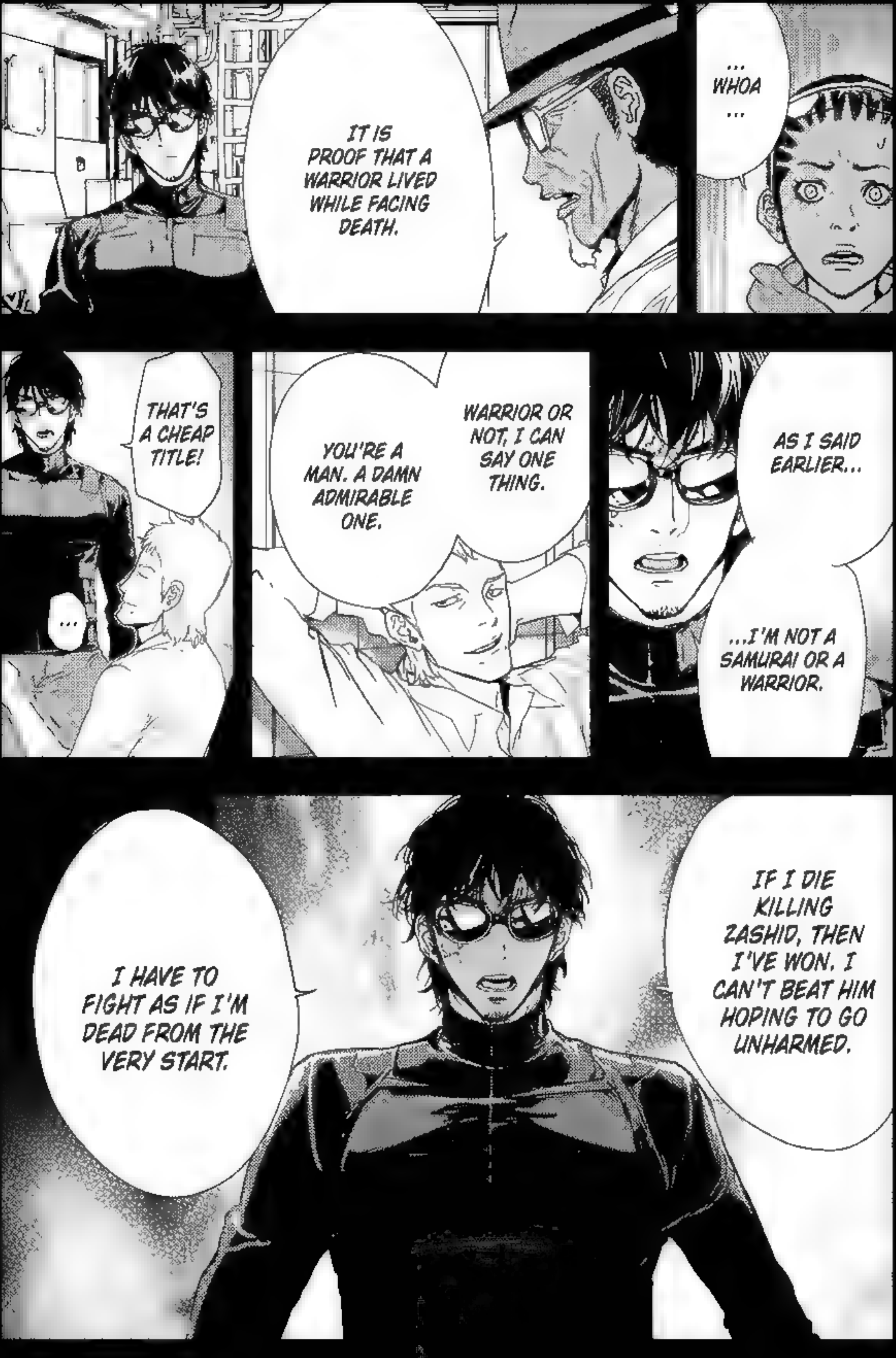
chapter 202

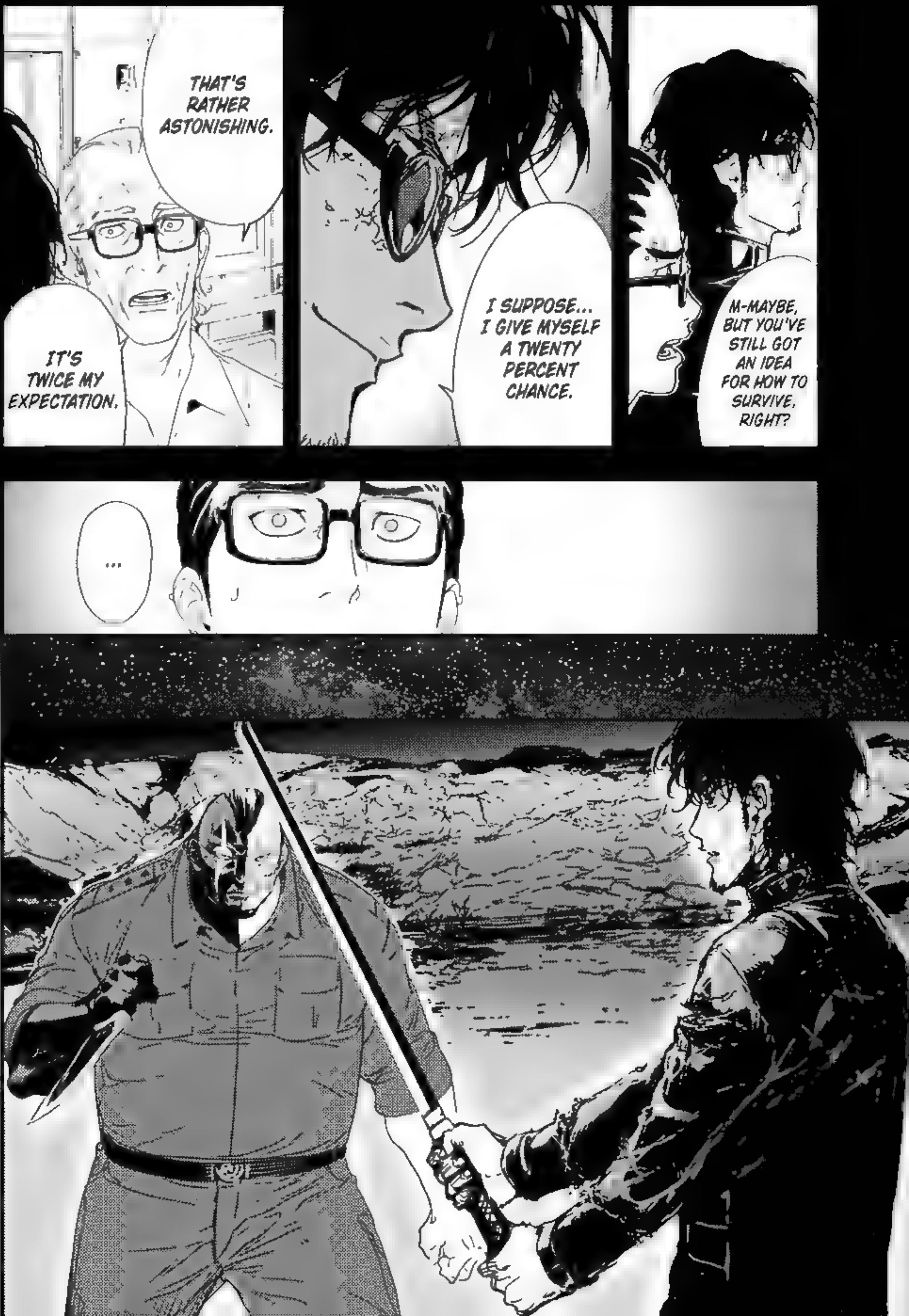

...
TWO OPTIONS? WHAT ARE THEY...?
FIRST, TO RELY ON SOME KIND OF ULTIMATE TECHNIQUE THAT MIGHT NOT EVEN EXIST.
??

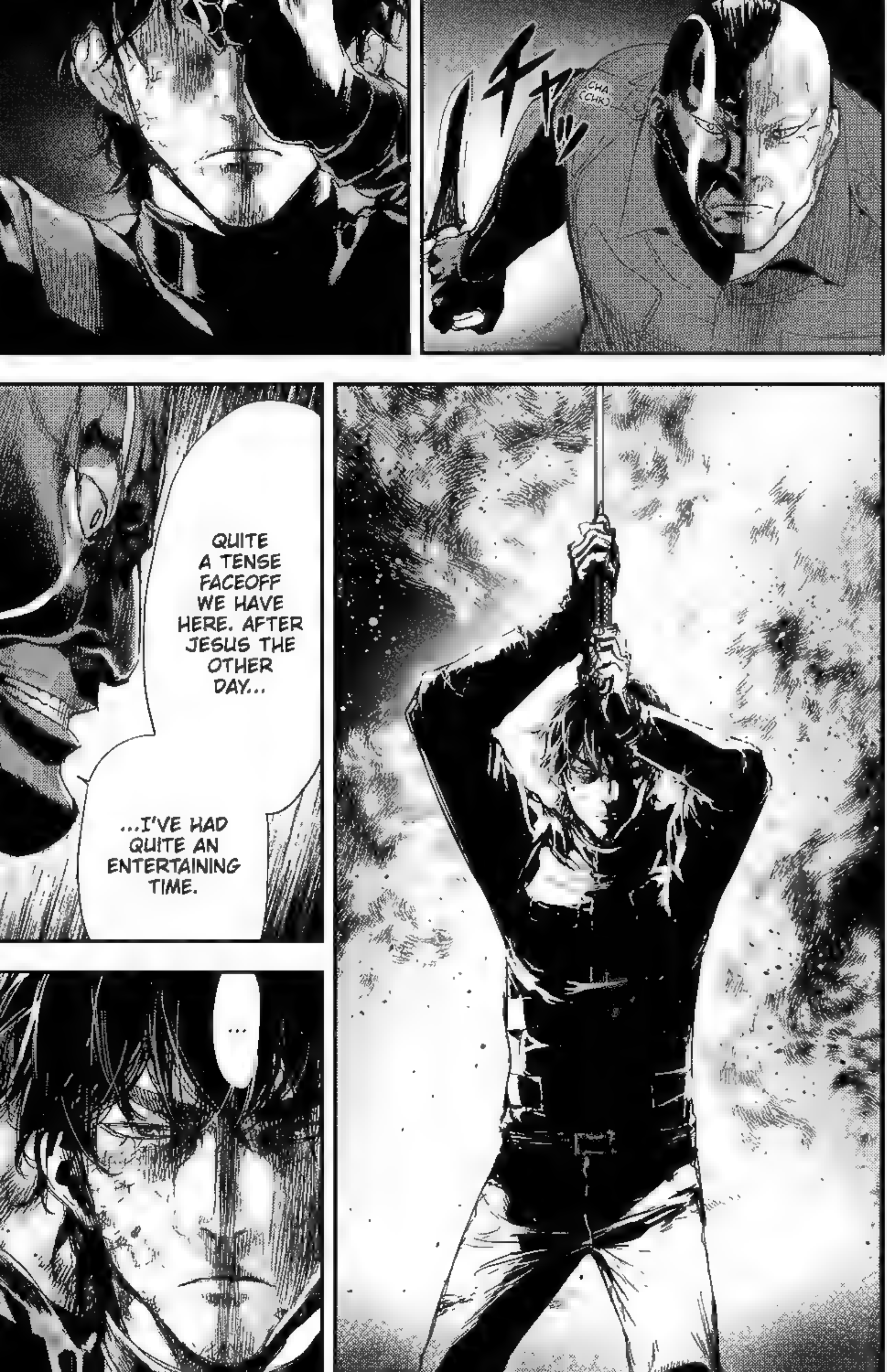

IN SWORDSMANSHIP INSTRUCTION TEXTS, THERE ARE SPECIALTY ATTACKS THAT EVEN I HAVE NO IDEA HOW TO INTERPRET.
IN MOST CASES, IT COMES DOWN TO ENCOUNTERING SOMETHING THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH TECHNIQUE.
MOSTLY IT'S STUFF LIKE, "CUT LIKE THIS AND YOU WILL SURELY PREVAIL," OR, "ACHIEVE THIS, AND YOU WILL BE INVINCIBLE."
IN OTHER WORDS, THE ULTIMATE CONCLUSION HAS MORE TO DO WITH STATE OF MIND THAN ANYTHING ELSE.
IN MOST CASES, THEY'RE JUST A BIG BLUFF TO MAKE THEIR OWN TEACHINGS SEEM LIKE THE COOLEST THING TO THE READER.
OF COURSE, SOME OF THEM COULD BE THE REAL THING, AND I JUST DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH EXPERIENCE IN THAT STYLE TO RECOGNIZE IT YET.
ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE'S ANOTHER, MORE EFFECTIVE METHOD THAT DOESN'T RELY ON SUCH UNTRUSTWORTHY HOPES.
AND THAT IS...?
IT'S USING THE BEST MOVES THAT I CAN UNDERSTAND—THE IDEAL STRATEGY TO DRAW OUT MY SKILL TO ITS ULTIMATE LEVEL.

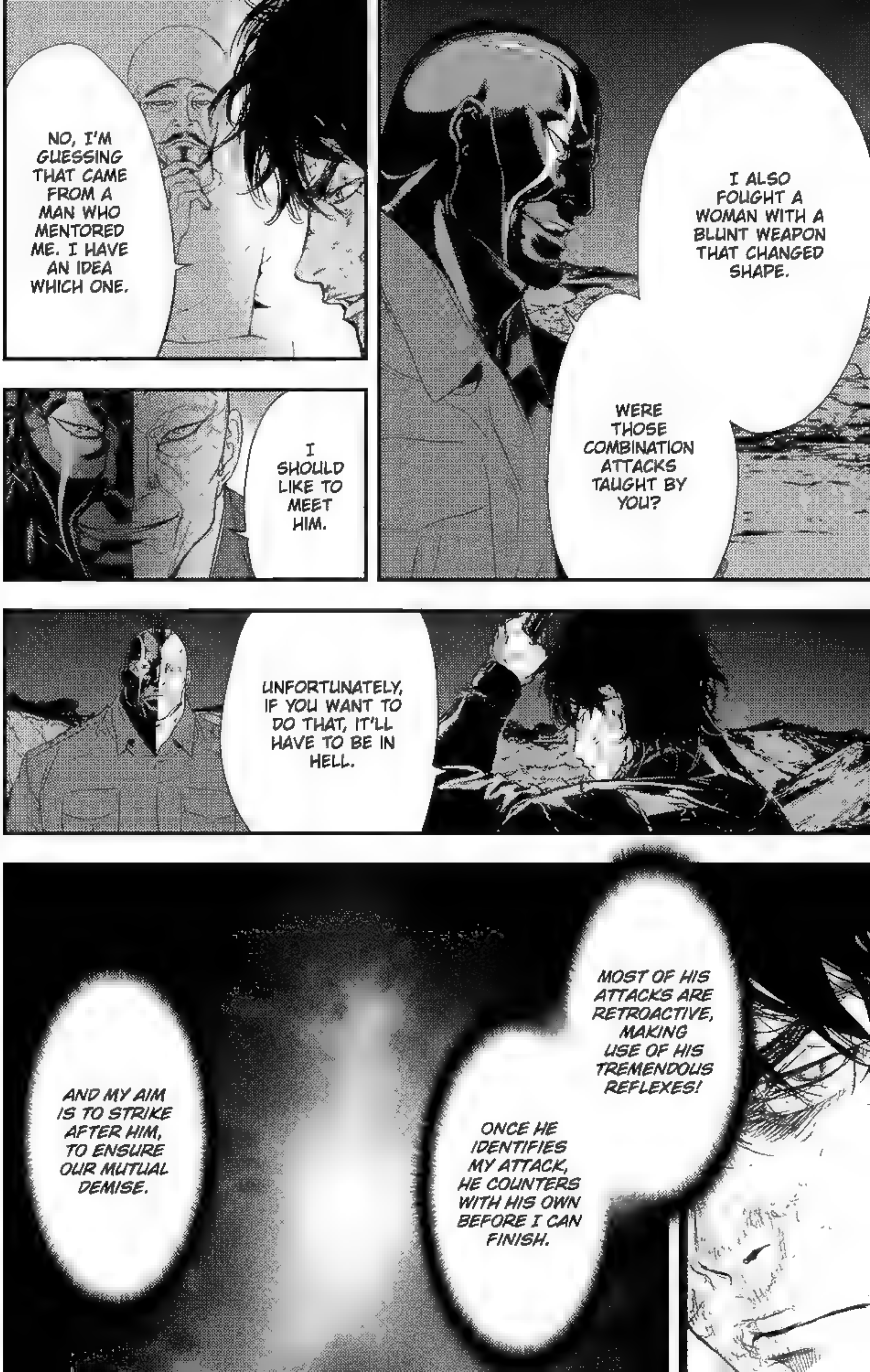

A MUTUAL STRIKE.
MUTUAL ...?
YES. AIM FOR THE DOUBLE KILL.
CONSIDER YOURSELF DEAD. ABANDON YOUR ATTACHMENT TO LIFE. LURE ZASHID'S ATTACK...
...SUCH THAT HE IS WITHIN YOUR BLADE'S INESCAPABLE ATTACK RANGE.

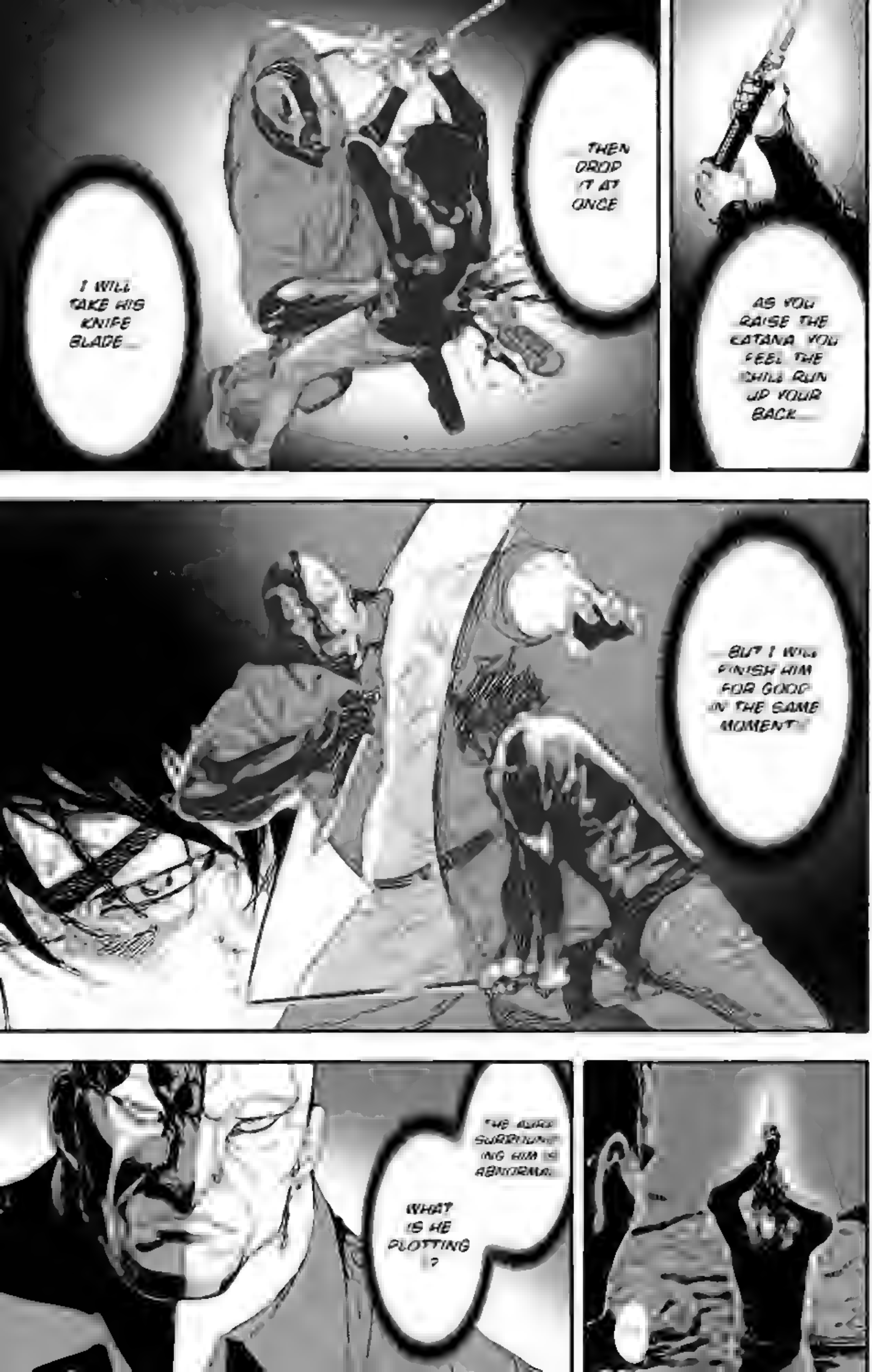

IF I STAY WITHIN THE RANGE OF HIS OWN ATTACK HITTING ME...
...THEN HE WILL INEVITABLY BE WITHIN MY RANGE. THAT'S THE SIMPLE, ELEGANT ANSWER.
AS THE LOGIC GOES, THE LIVING CANNOT DEFEAT THE DEAD...
IN THE BOOK OF HAGAKURE, IT SAYS THAT BEING A WARRIOR MEANS TO "FIND ONE'S OWN DEATH."
"WHEN THERE IS A CHOICE BETWEEN THE TWO, HE MUST CHOOSE THAT WHICH OFFERS DEATH, PLUNGING RECKLESSLY TOWARD AN UNQUESTIONING END."
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
YOU THINK I UNDERSTAND THAT BUDDHIST RIDDLE SHIT?
IT MEANS THAT WHEN FACED WITH A CHOICE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH...
...YOU WILL ALWAYS BE BEST SERVED BY CHOOSING THE PATH THAT OFFERS DEATH.

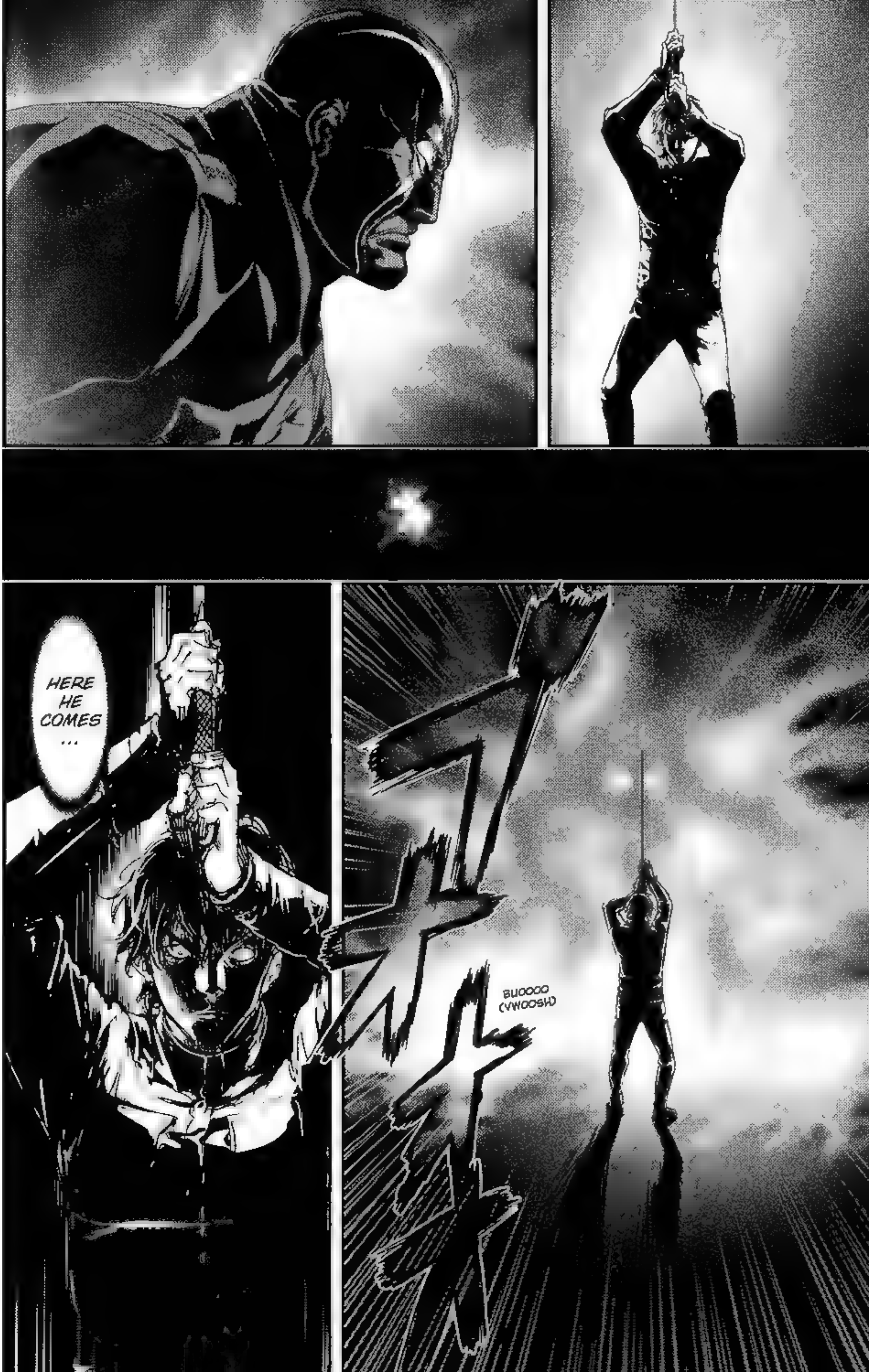

... WHOA ...
IT IS PROOF THAT A WARRIOR LIVED WHILE FACING DEATH.
AS I SAID EARLIER...
...I'M NOT A SAMURAI OR A WARRIOR.
WARRIOR OR NOT, I CAN SAY ONE THING.
YOU'RE A MAN. A DAMN ADMIRABLE ONE.
THAT'S A CHEAP TITLE!
...
IF I DIE KILLING ZASHID, THEN I'VE WON. I CAN'T BEAT HIM HOPING TO GO UNHARMED.
I HAVE TO FIGHT AS IF I'M DEAD FROM THE VERY START.

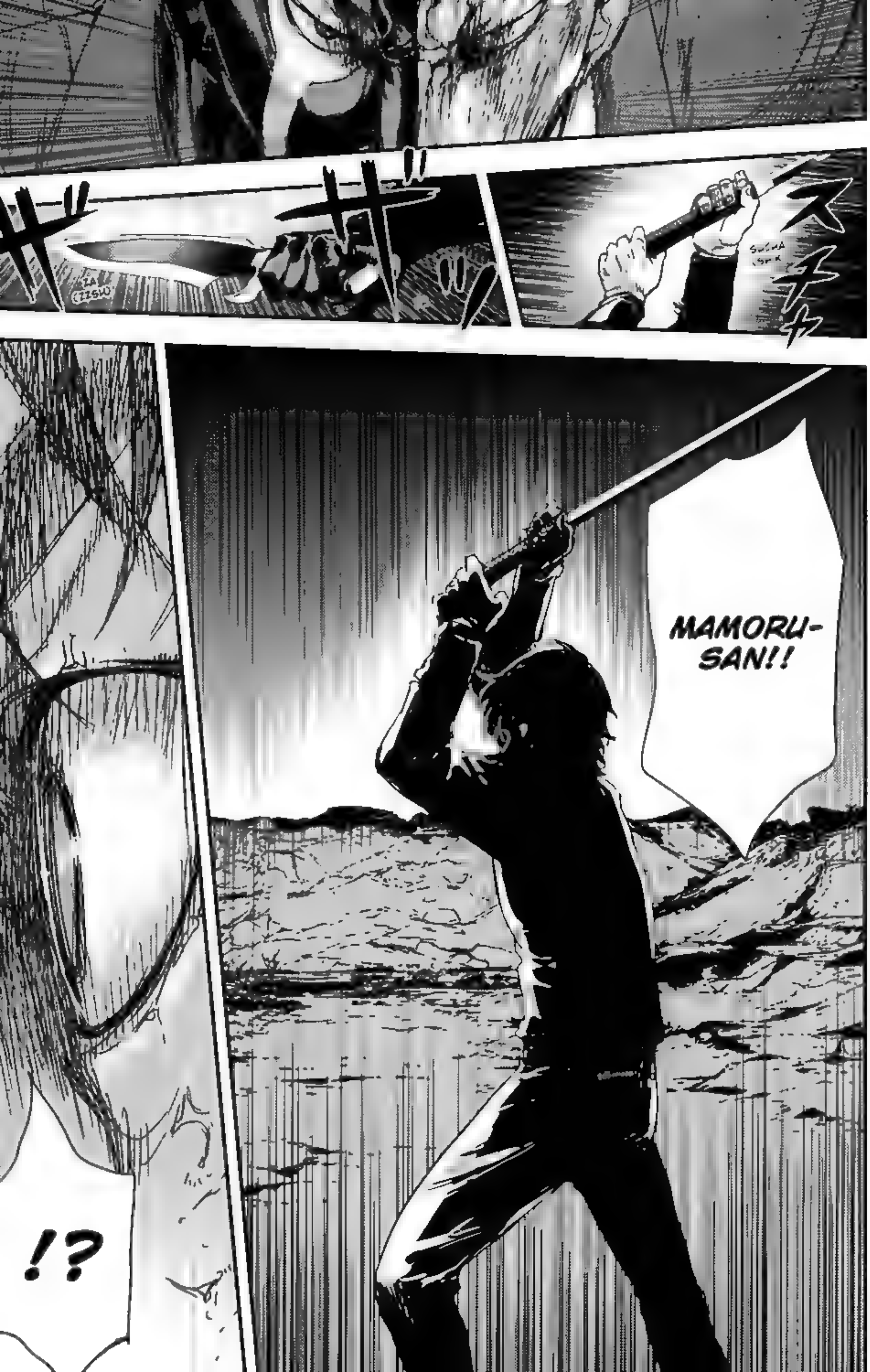

M-MAYBE, BUT YOU'VE STILL GOT AN IDEA FOR HOW TO SURVIVE, RIGHT?
I SUPPOSE... I GIVE MYSELF A TWENTY PERCENT CHANCE.
THAT'S RATHER ASTONISHING.
IT'S TWICE MY EXPECTATION.
...

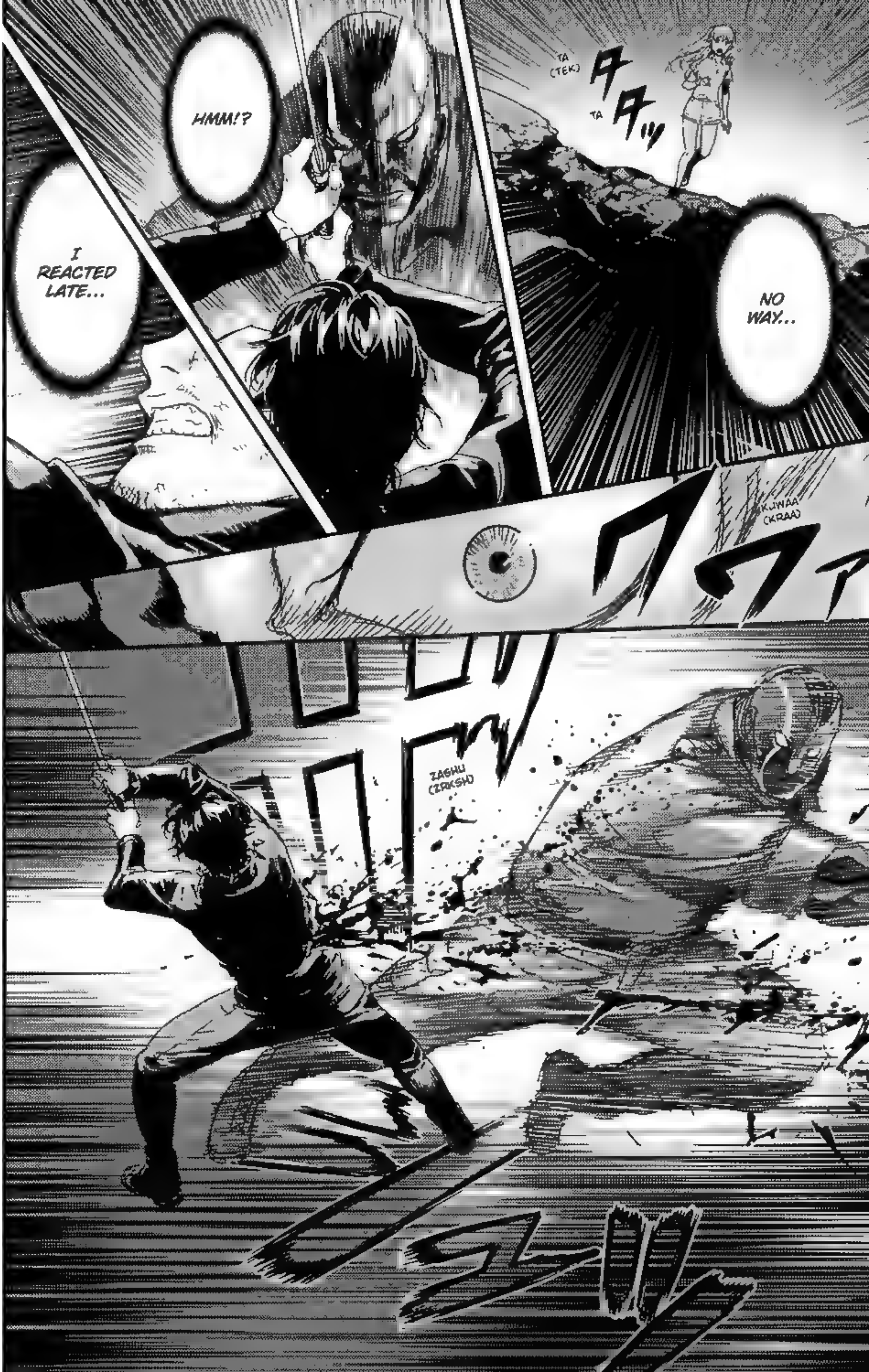

チャッ
CHA (CHK)
QUITE A TENSE FACEOFF WE HAVE HERE. AFTER JESUS THE OTHER DAY...
...I'VE HAD QUITE AN ENTERTAINING TIME.
...

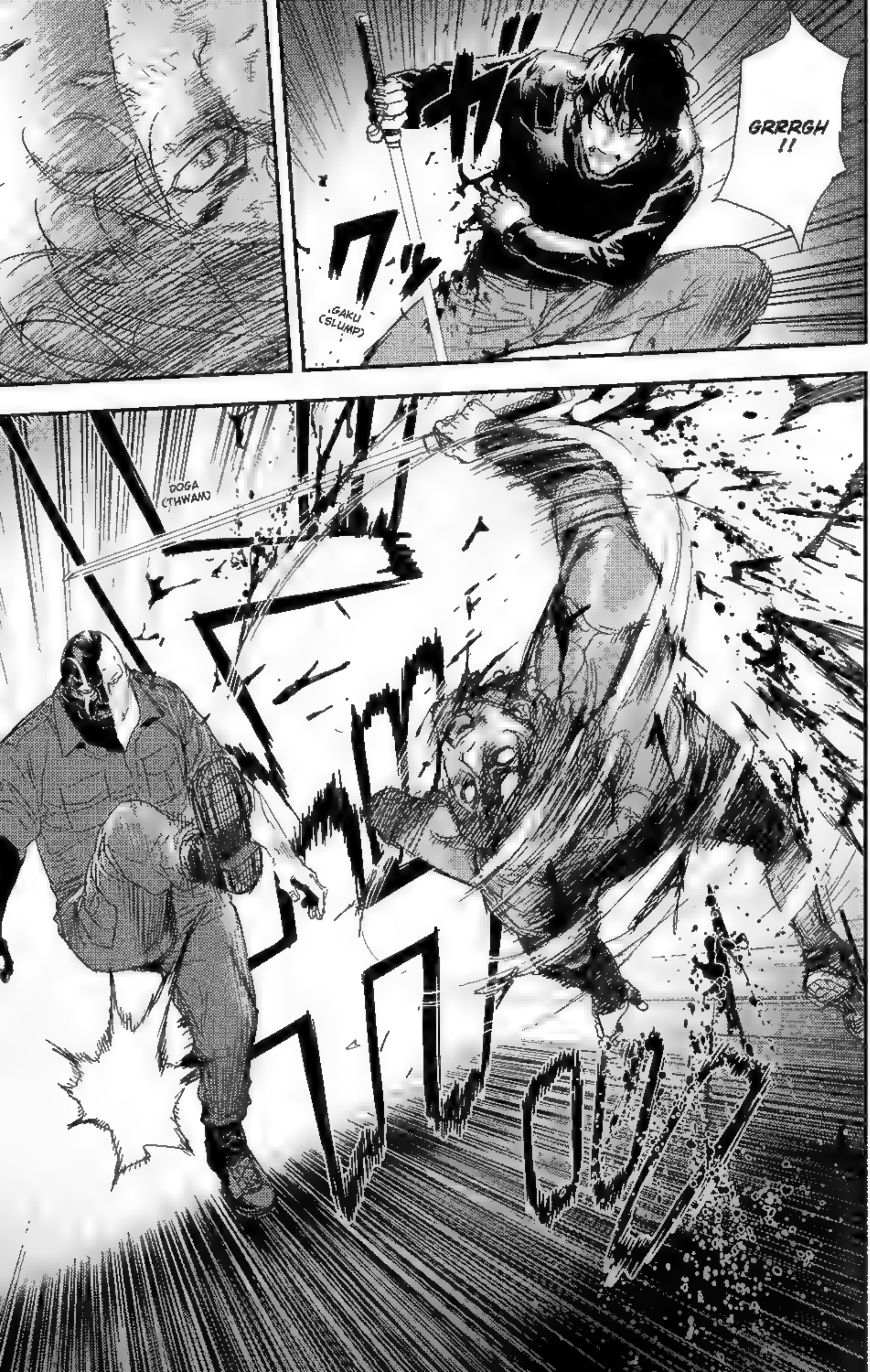

I ALSO FOUGHT A WOMAN WITH A BLUNT WEAPON THAT CHANGED SHAPE.
WERE THOSE COMBINATION ATTACKS TAUGHT BY YOU?
NO, I'M GUESSING THAT CAME FROM A MAN WHO MENTORED ME. I HAVE AN IDEA WHICH ONE.
I SHOULD LIKE TO MEET HIM.
UNFORTUNATELY, IF YOU WANT TO DO THAT, IT'LL HAVE TO BE IN HELL.
MOST OF HIS ATTACKS ARE RETROACTIVE, MAKING USE OF HIS TREMENDOUS REFLEXES!
ONCE HE IDENTIFIES MY ATTACK, HE COUNTERS WITH HIS OWN BEFORE I CAN FINISH.
AND MY AIM IS TO STRIKE AFTER HIM, TO ENSURE OUR MUTUAL DEMISE.

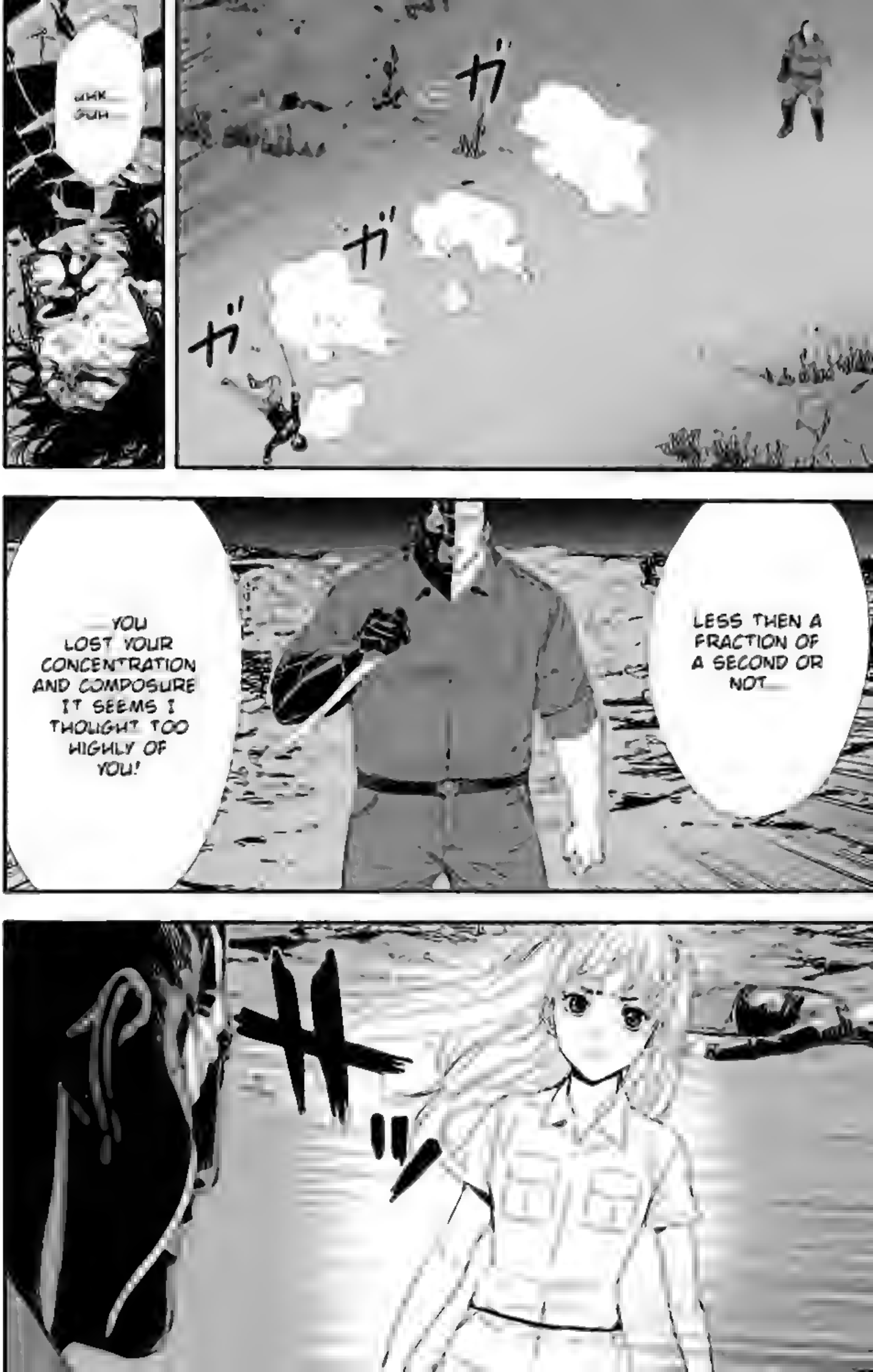

AS YOU RAISE THE KATANA YOU FEEL THE CHILL RUN UP YOUR BACK...
...THEN DROP IT AT ONCE
I WILL TAKE HIS KNIFE BLADE...
...BUT I WILL FINISH HIM FOR GOOD IN THE SAME MOMENT!!
THE AURA SURROUNDING HIM IS ABNORMAL
WHAT IS HE PLOTTING !?

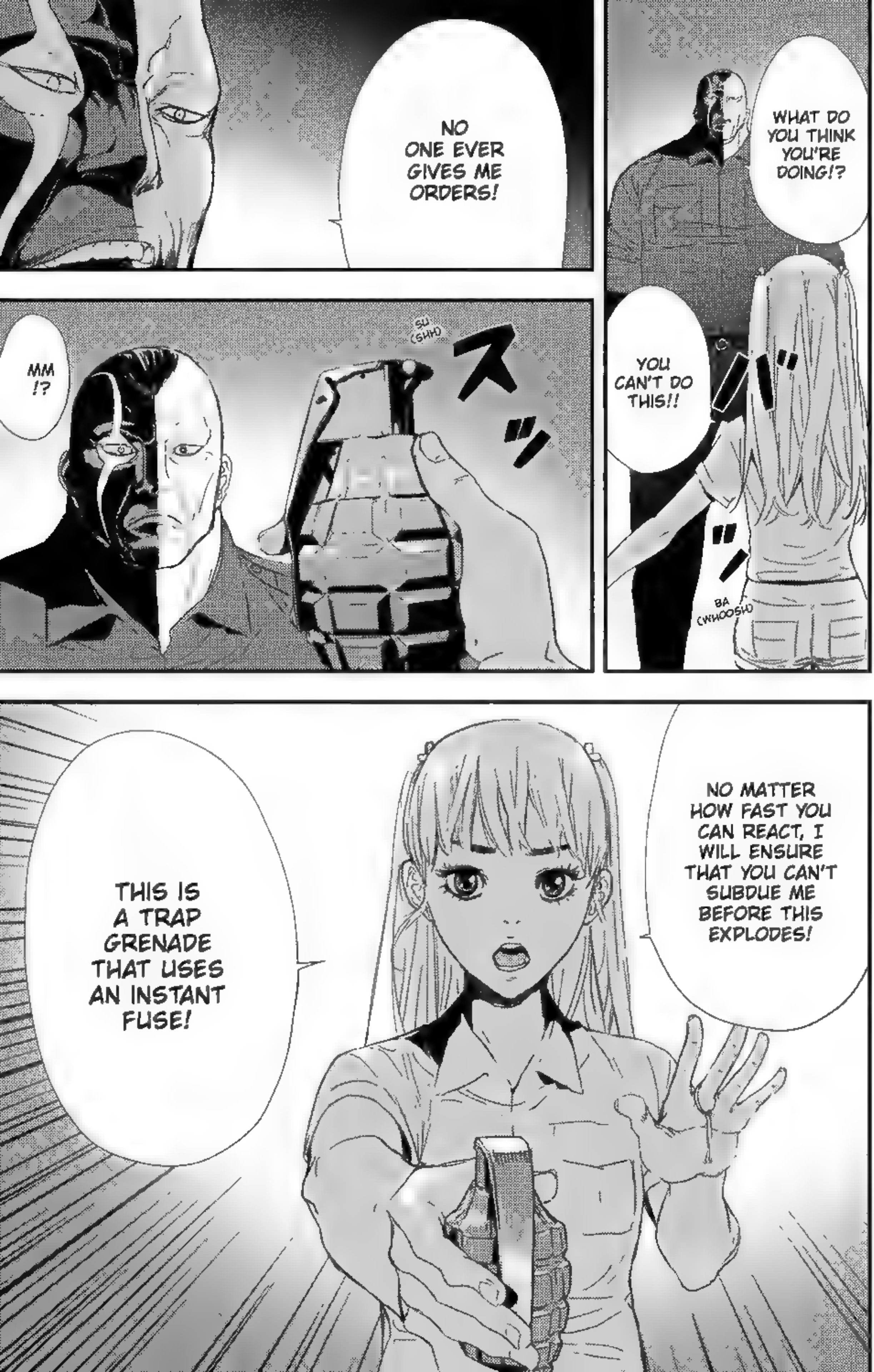

BUOOOO
(VWOOSH)
HERE HE COMES ...

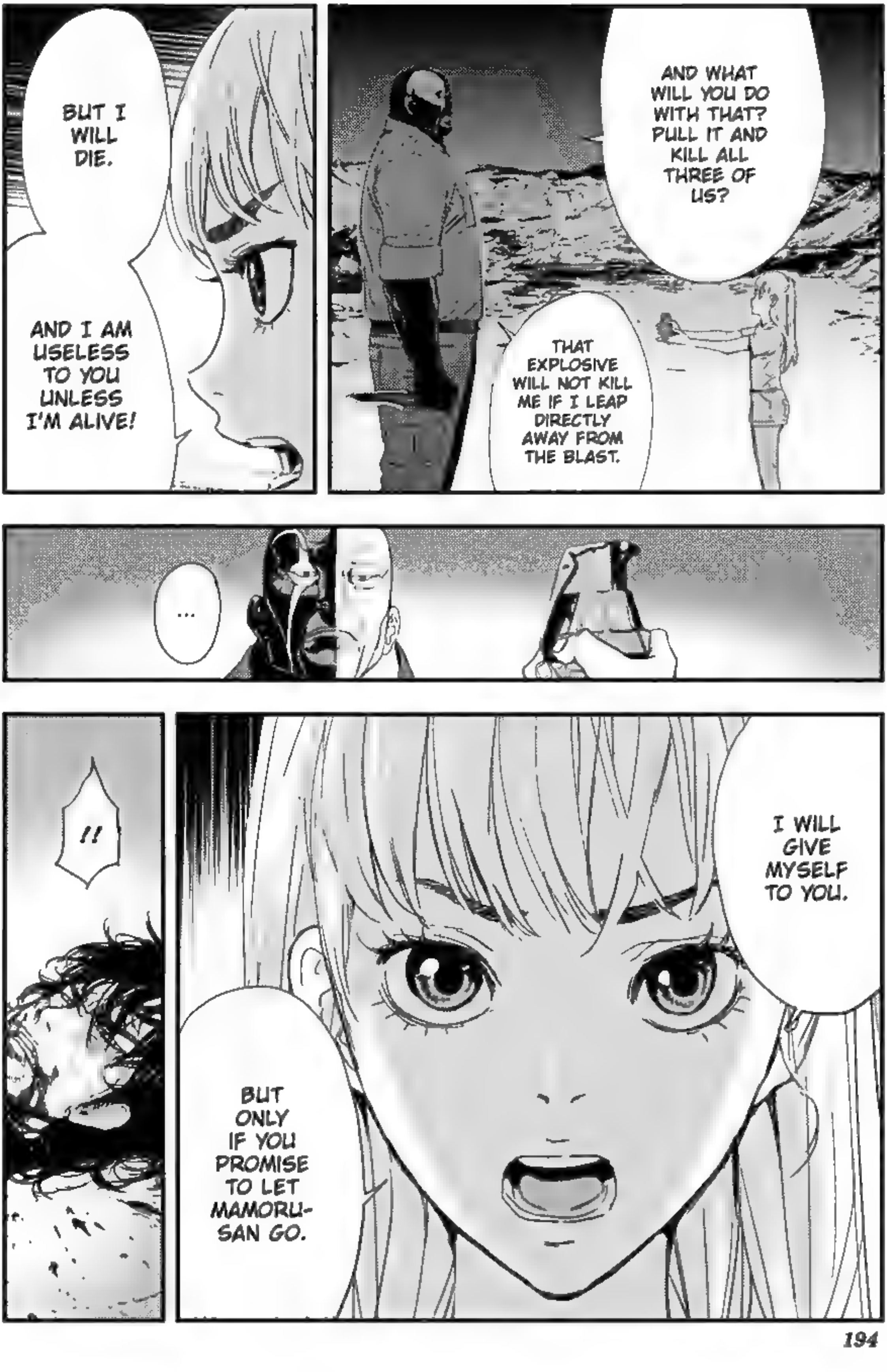

スチャ
SUCHA
ザザ
ZA
MAMORU-SAN!!
!?

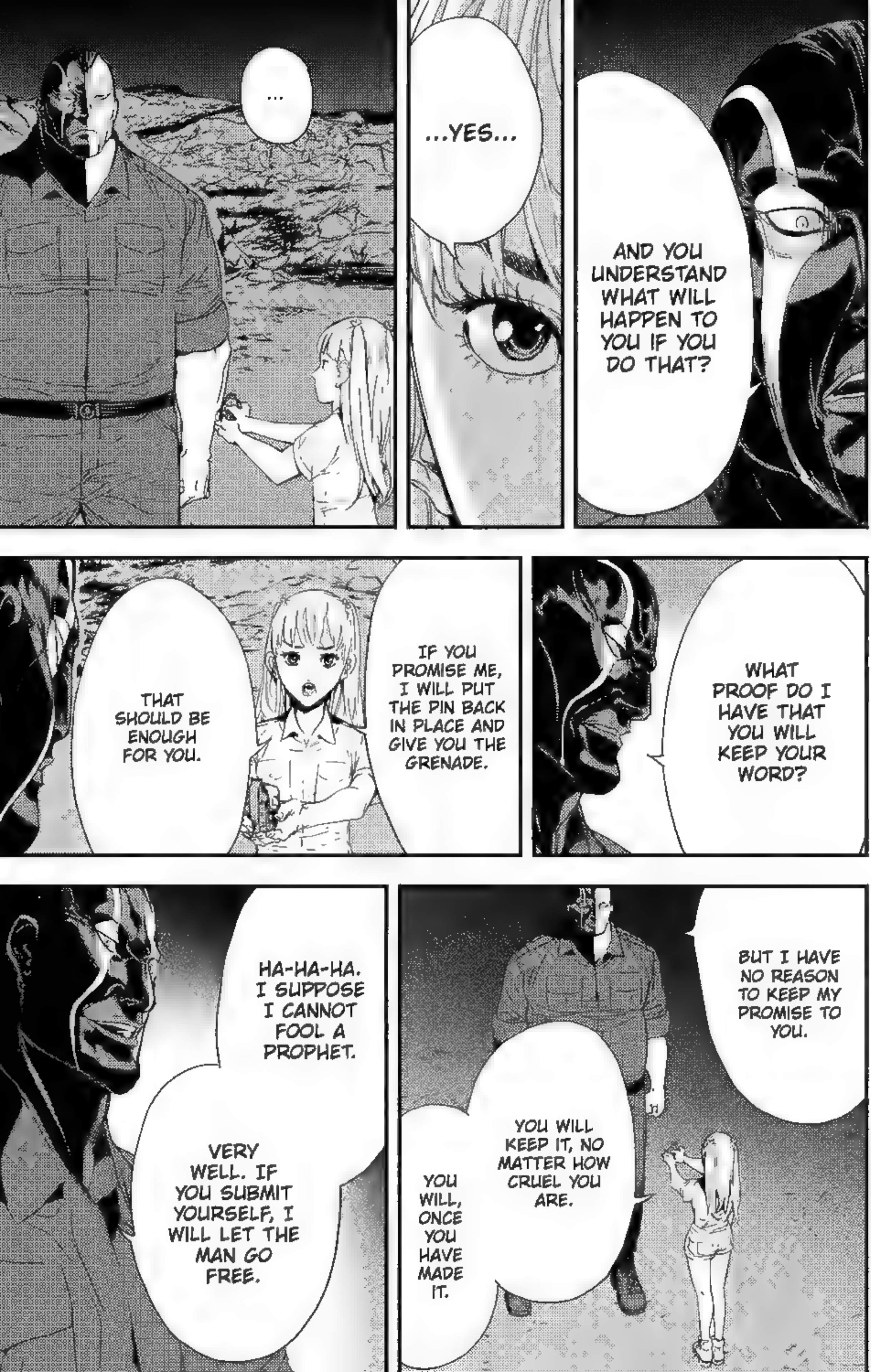

TA (TEK) タ TA タッ
NO WAY...
HMM!?
I REACTED LATE...
KUWAA (KRAA) クワァ
ZASHU (ZRKSH)

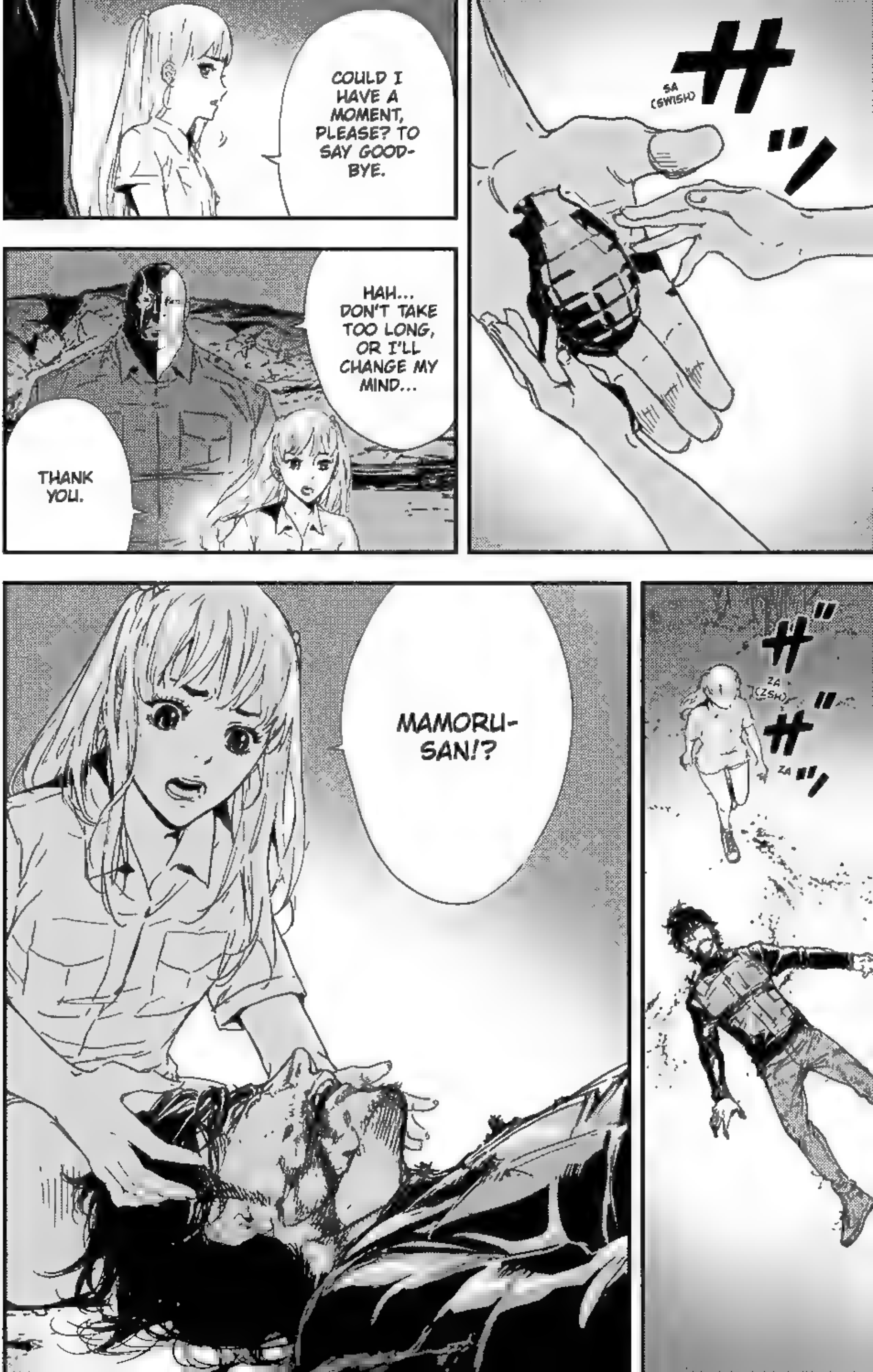

GRRRGH !!
GAKU (SLUMP)
DOGA (THWAM)

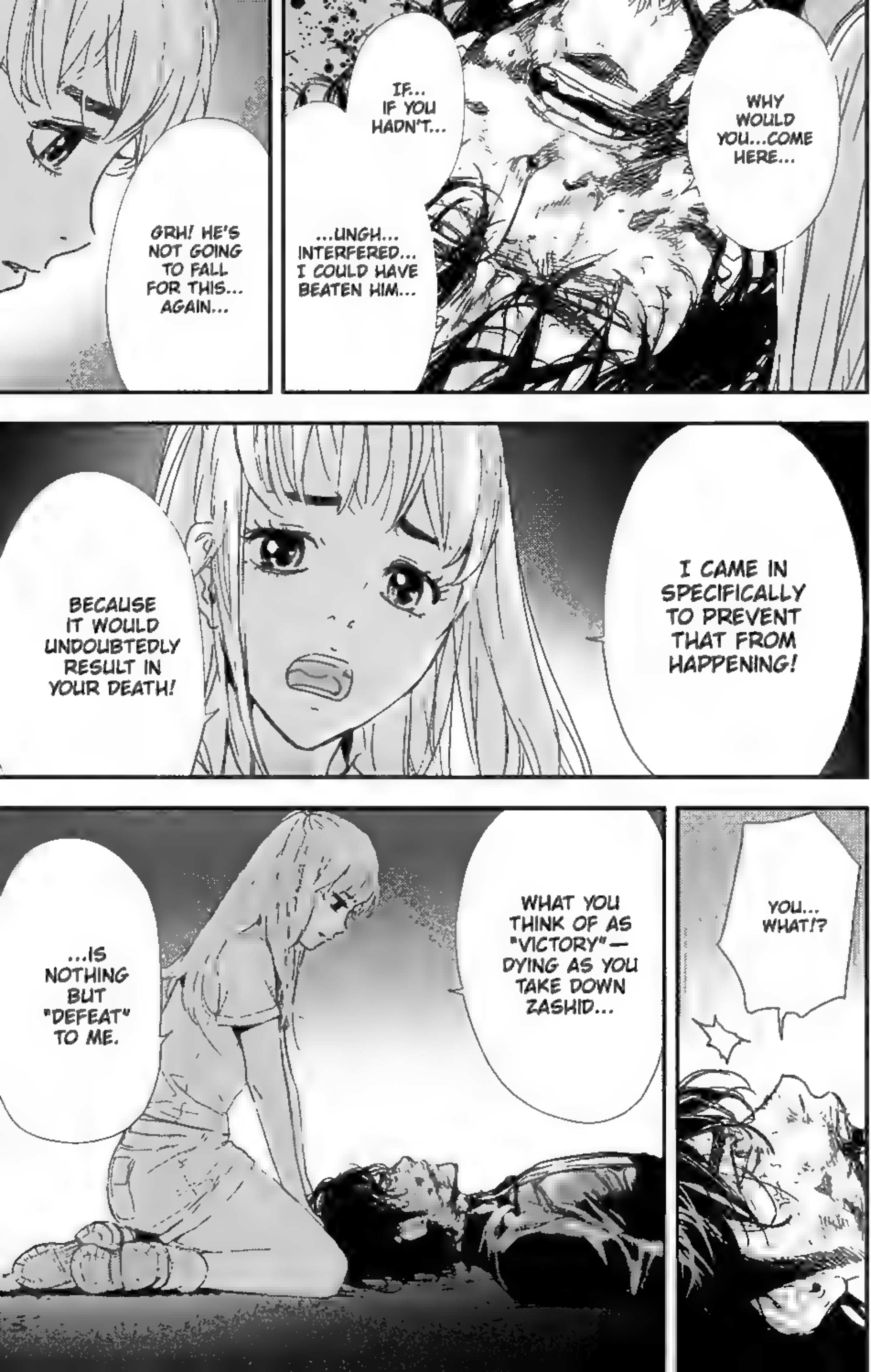

ガ
ガ
ガ
UHK—
GUH—
LESS THEN A FRACTION OF A SECOND OR NOT...
—YOU LOST YOUR CONCENTRATION AND COMPOSURE IT SEEMS I THOUGHT TOO HIGHLY OF YOU!
ハッ

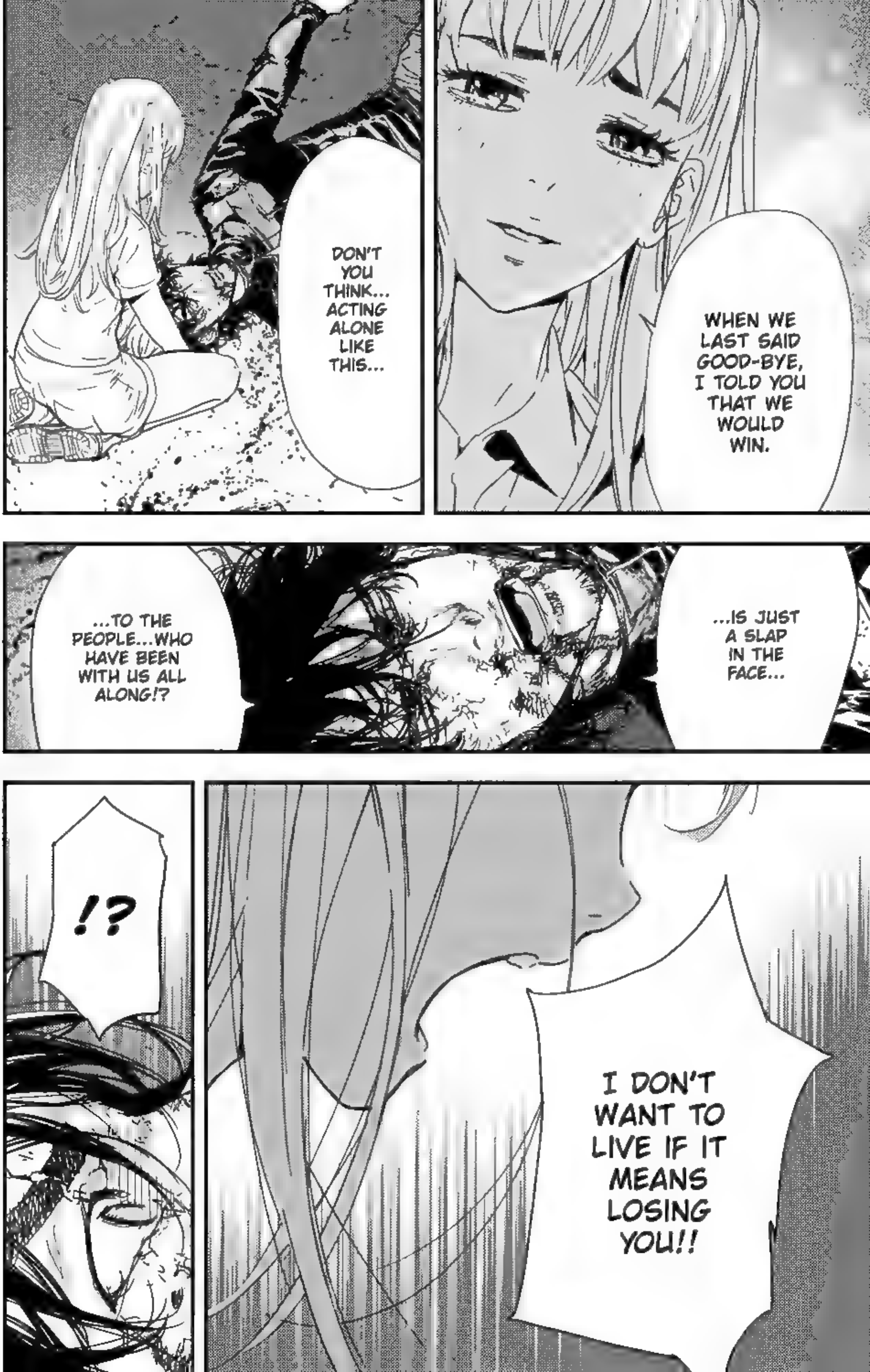

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING!?
YOU CAN'T DO THIS!!
BA (WHOOSH)
NO ONE EVER GIVES ME ORDERS!
SU (SHH)
MM !?
NO MATTER HOW FAST YOU CAN REACT, I WILL ENSURE THAT YOU CAN'T SUBDUE ME BEFORE THIS EXPLODES!
THIS IS A TRAP GRENADE THAT USES AN INSTANT FUSE!

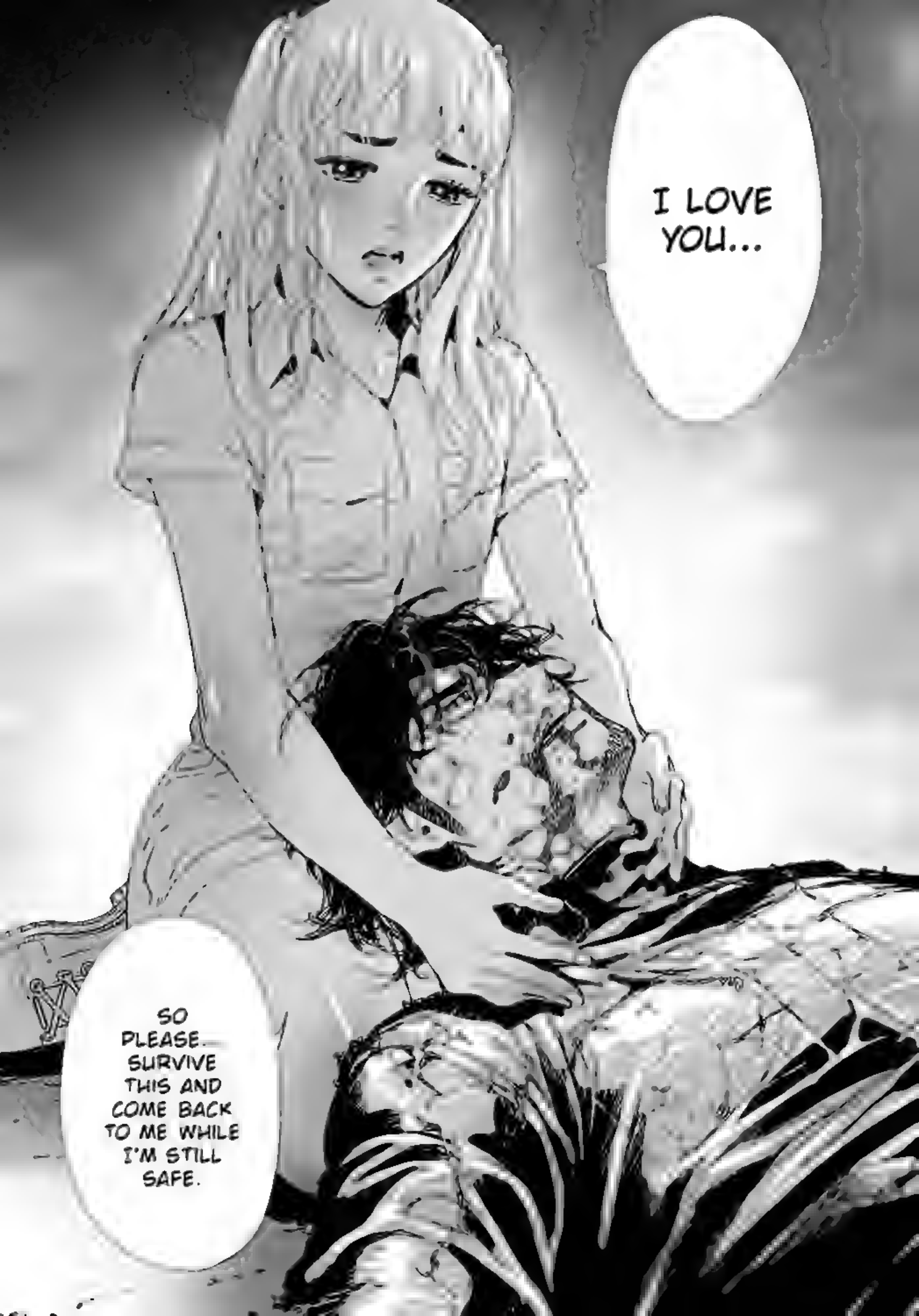

AND WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH THAT? PULL IT AND KILL ALL THREE OF US?
THAT EXPLOSIVE WILL NOT KILL ME IF I LEAP DIRECTLY AWAY FROM THE BLAST.
BUT I WILL DIE.
AND I AM USELESS TO YOU UNLESS I'M ALIVE!
...
I WILL GIVE MYSELF TO YOU.
BUT ONLY IF YOU PROMISE TO LET MAMORU-SAN GO.
!!

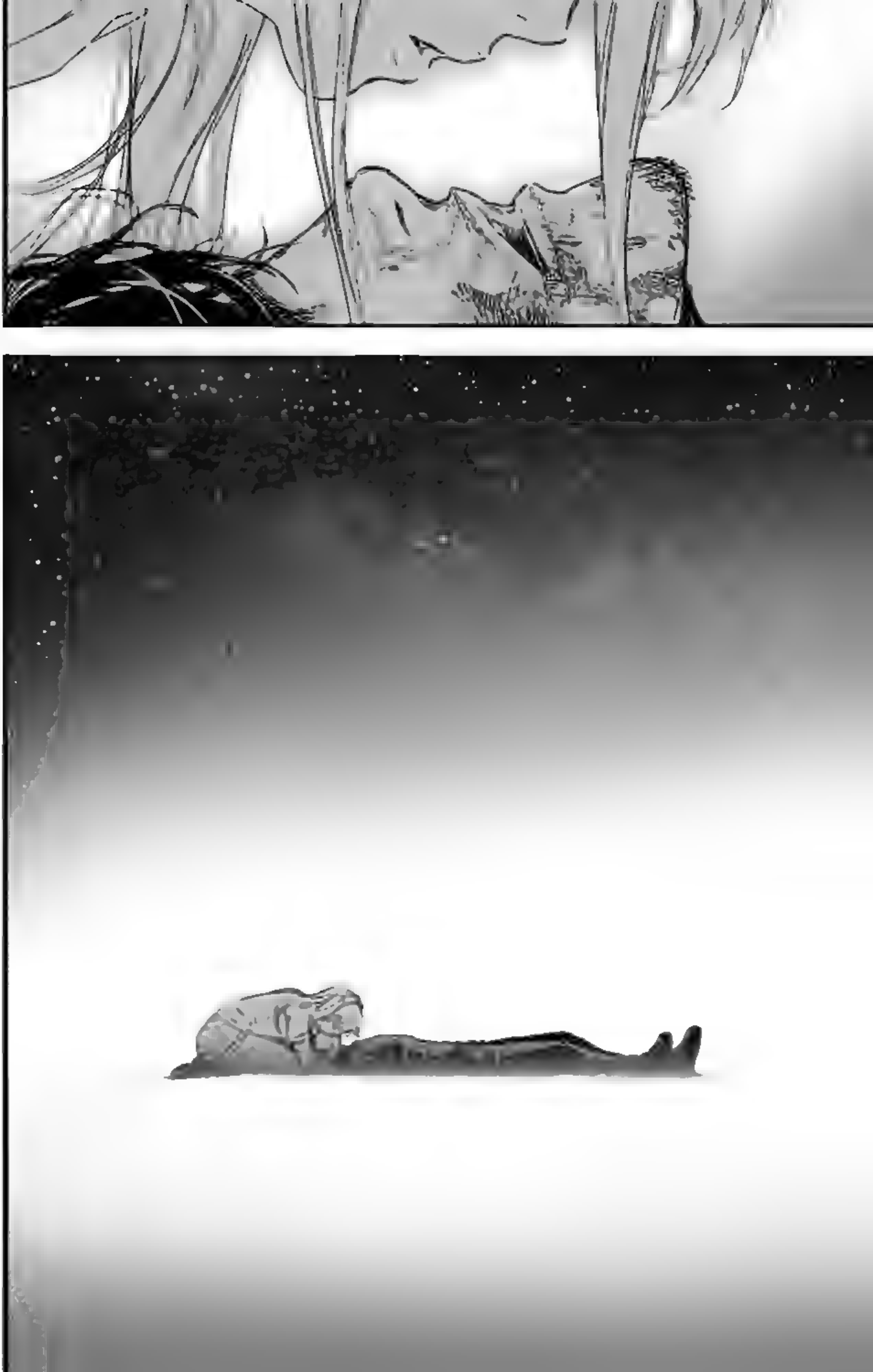

AND YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO YOU IF YOU DO THAT?
...YES...
...
WHAT PROOF DO I HAVE THAT YOU WILL KEEP YOUR WORD?
IF YOU PROMISE ME, I WILL PUT THE PIN BACK IN PLACE AND GIVE YOU THE GRENADE.
THAT SHOULD BE ENOUGH FOR YOU.
BUT I HAVE NO REASON TO KEEP MY PROMISE TO YOU.
YOU WILL KEEP IT, NO MATTER HOW CRUEL YOU ARE.
YOU WILL, ONCE YOU HAVE MADE IT.
HA-HA-HA. I SUPPOSE I CANNOT FOOL A PROPHET.
VERY WELL. IF YOU SUBMIT YOURSELF, I WILL LET THE MAN GO FREE.

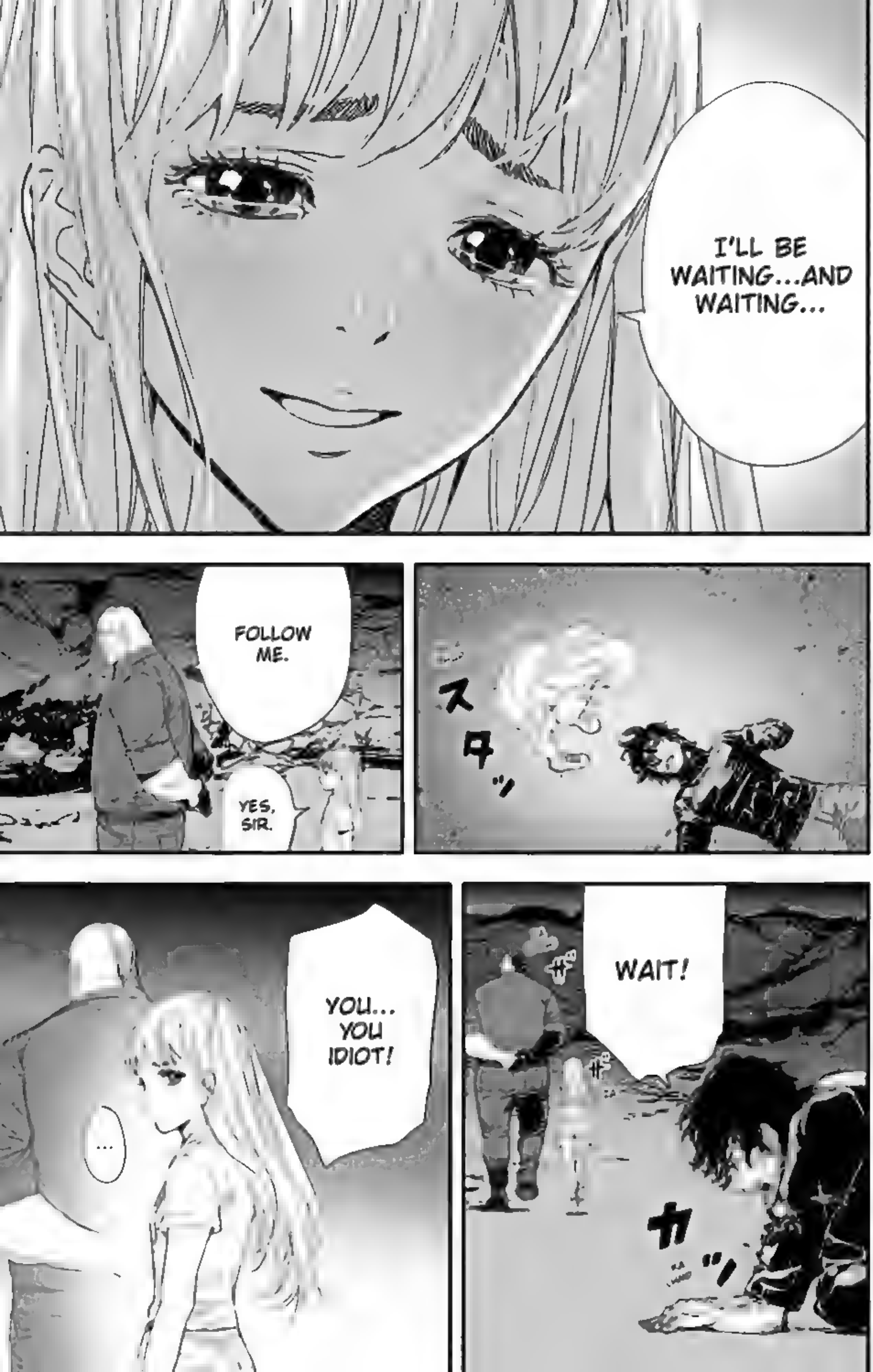

サッ
SA (SWISH)
COULD I HAVE A MOMENT, PLEASE? TO SAY GOOD-BYE.
HAH... DON'T TAKE TOO LONG, OR I'LL CHANGE MY MIND...
THANK YOU.
ザッ
ZA (ZSH)
ザッ
ZA
MAMORU-SAN!?

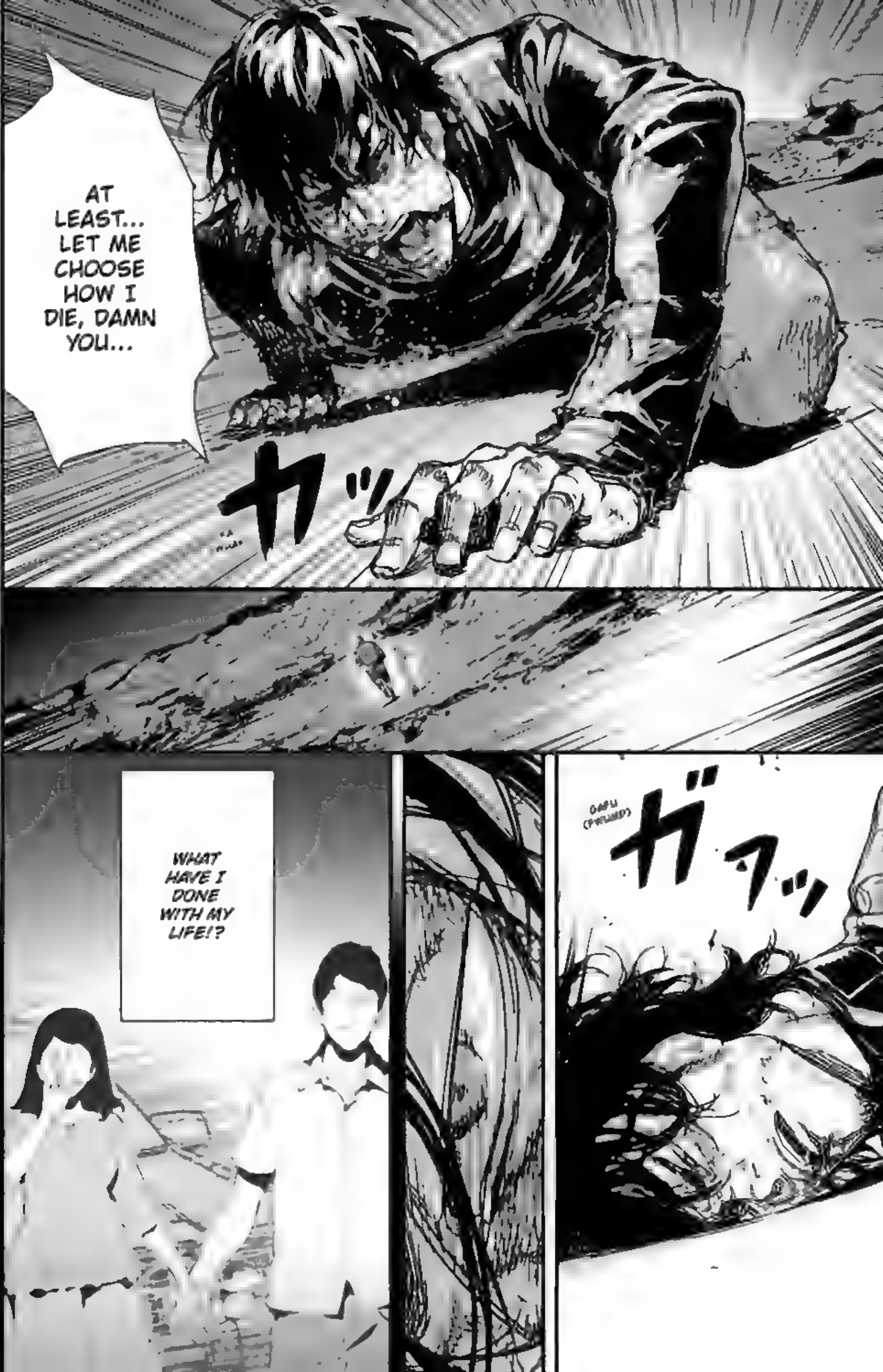

WHY WOULD YOU...COME HERE...
IF... IF YOU HADN'T...
...UNGH... INTERFERED... I COULD HAVE BEATEN HIM...
GRH! HE'S NOT GOING TO FALL FOR THIS... AGAIN...
I CAME IN SPECIFICALLY TO PREVENT THAT FROM HAPPENING!
BECAUSE IT WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY RESULT IN YOUR DEATH!
YOU... WHAT!?
WHAT YOU THINK OF AS "VICTORY"—DYING AS YOU TAKE DOWN ZASHID...
...IS NOTHING BUT "DEFEAT" TO ME.

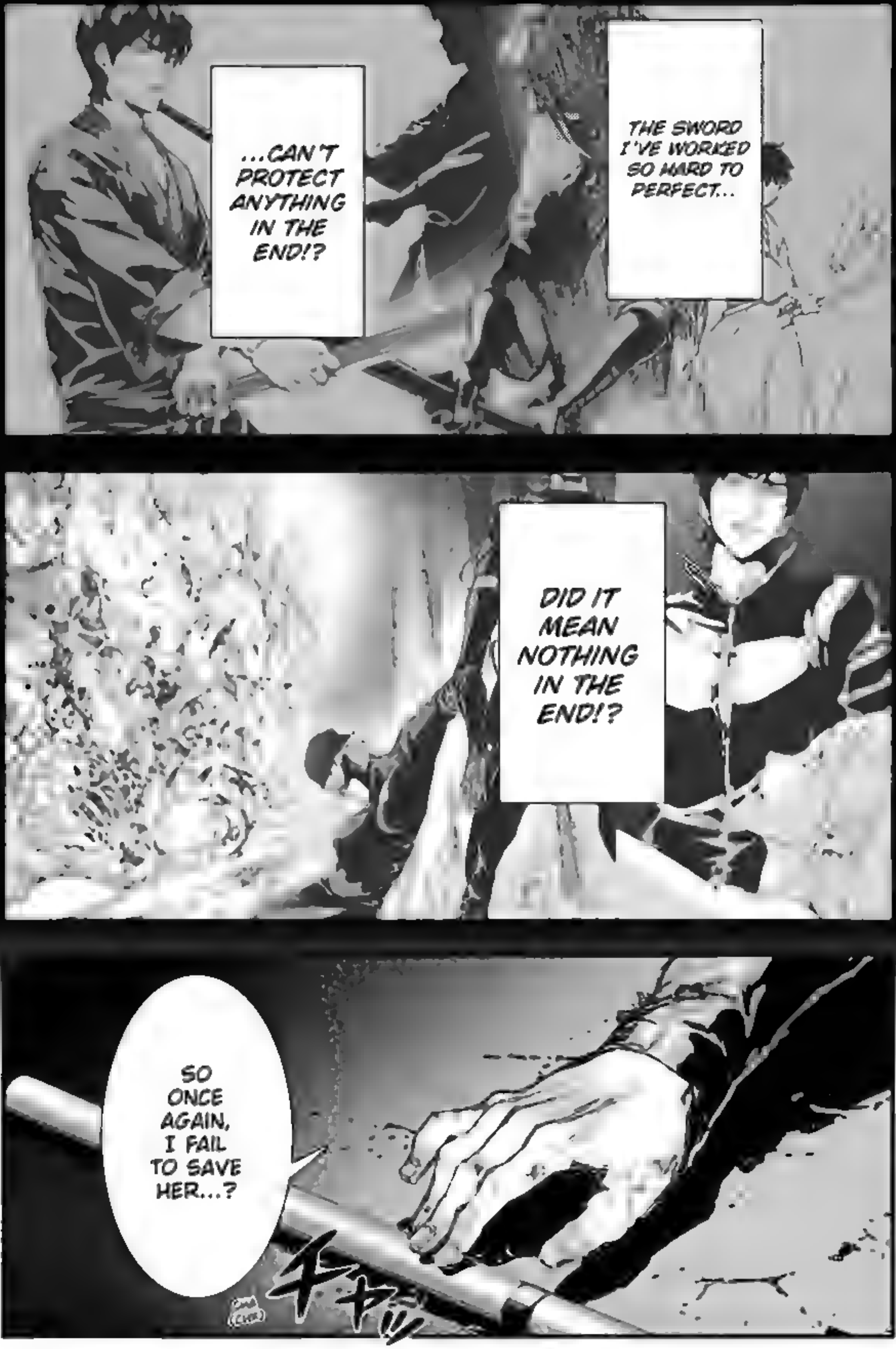

WHEN WE LAST SAID GOOD-BYE, I TOLD YOU THAT WE WOULD WIN.
DON'T YOU THINK... ACTING ALONE LIKE THIS...
...IS JUST A SLAP IN THE FACE...
...TO THE PEOPLE...WHO HAVE BEEN WITH US ALL ALONG!?
I DON'T WANT TO LIVE IF IT MEANS LOSING YOU!!
!?

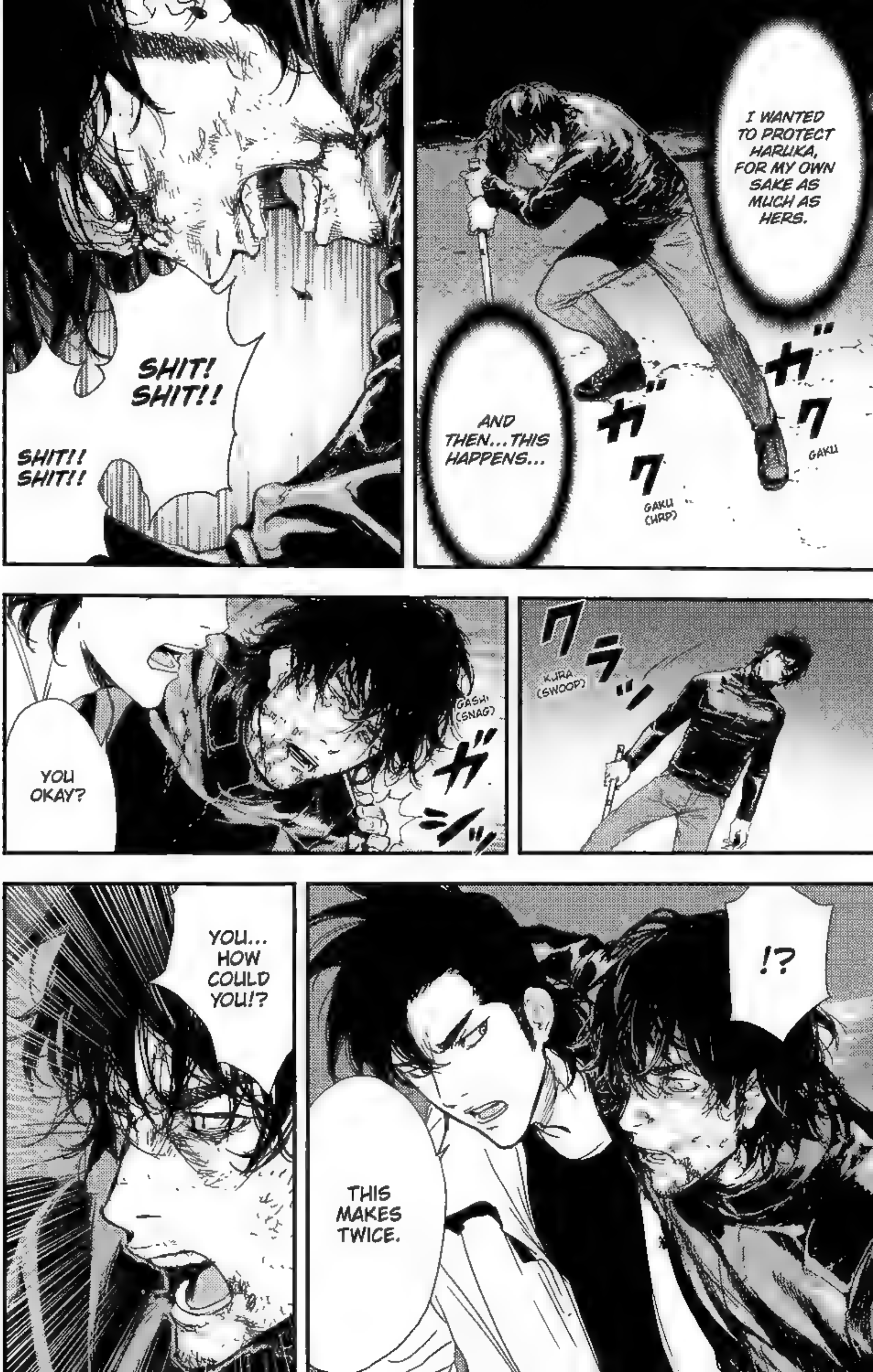

I LOVE YOU...
SO PLEASE... SURVIVE THIS AND COME BACK TO ME WHILE I'M STILL SAFE.

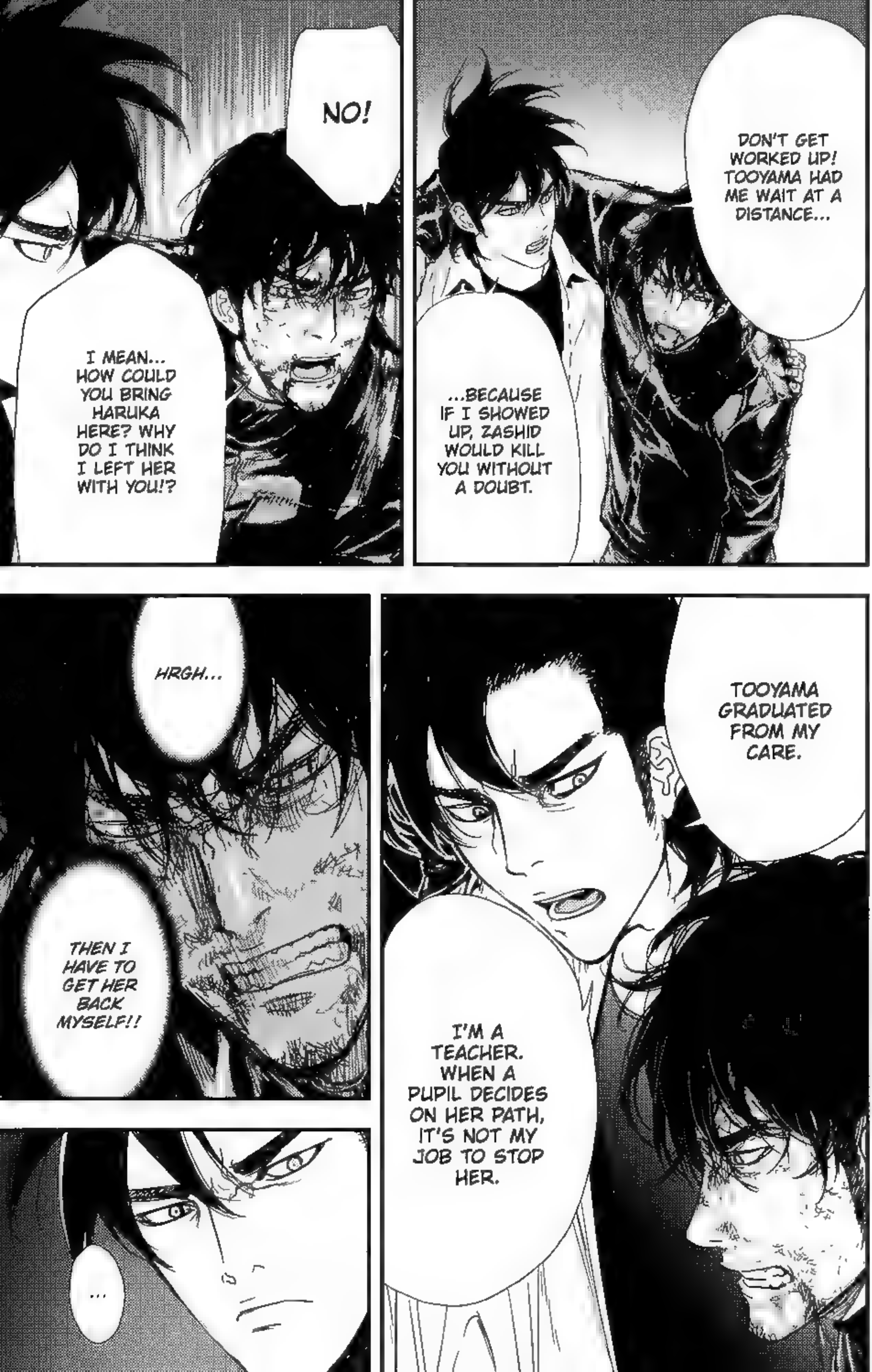


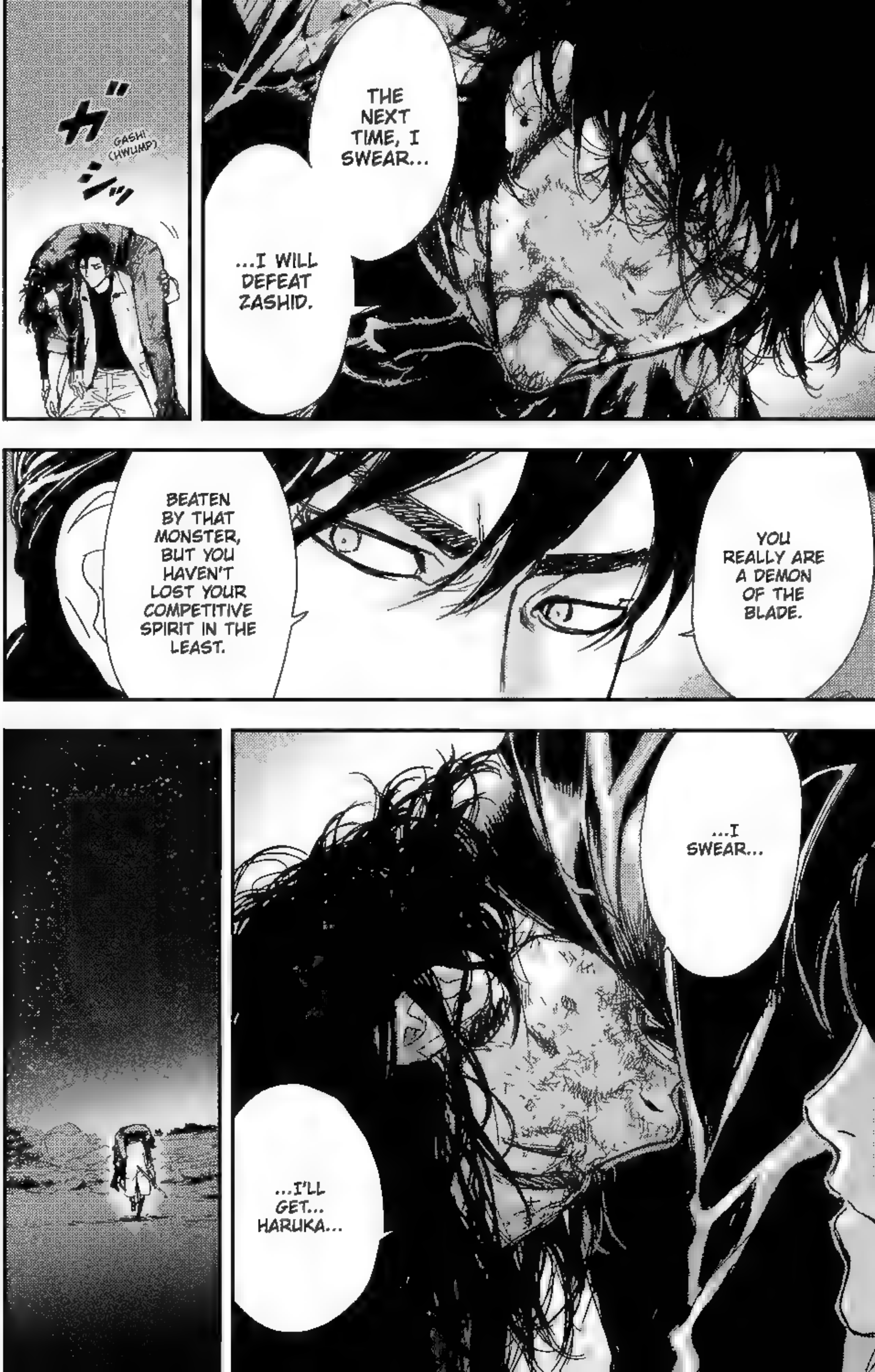

I'LL BE WAITING...AND WAITING...
スタッ
FOLLOW ME.
YES, SIR.
WAIT!
カッ
YOU... YOU IDIOT!
...


AT LEAST... LET ME CHOOSE HOW I DIE, DAMN YOU...
カッ
ガァッ
GAFU (FWUMP)
WHAT HAVE I DONE WITH MY LIFE!?


THE SWORD I'VE WORKED SO HARD TO PERFECT...
...CAN'T PROTECT ANYTHING IN THE END!?
DID IT MEAN NOTHING IN THE END!?
SO ONCE AGAIN, I FAIL TO SAVE HER...?
チャッ
(CLICK)


I WANTED TO PROTECT HARUKA, FOR MY OWN SAKE AS MUCH AS HERS.
AND THEN...THIS HAPPENS...
GAKU
GAKU (HRP)
SHIT! SHIT!!
SHIT!! SHIT!!
KURA (SWOOP)
GASHI (SNAG)
YOU OKAY?
!?
THIS MAKES TWICE.
YOU... HOW COULD YOU!?


DON'T GET WORKED UP! TOOYAMA HAD ME WAIT AT A DISTANCE...
...BECAUSE IF I SHOWED UP, ZASHID WOULD KILL YOU WITHOUT A DOUBT.
NO!
I MEAN... HOW COULD YOU BRING HARUKA HERE? WHY DO I THINK I LEFT HER WITH YOU!?
TOOYAMA GRADUATED FROM MY CARE.
I'M A TEACHER. WHEN A PUPIL DECIDES ON HER PATH, IT'S NOT MY JOB TO STOP HER.
HRGH...
THEN I HAVE TO GET HER BACK MYSELF!!
...


THE NEXT TIME, I SWEAR...
...I WILL DEFEAT ZASHID.
ガシッ
GASHI (HWUMP)
YOU REALLY ARE A DEMON OF THE BLADE.
BEATEN BY THAT MONSTER, BUT YOU HAVEN'T LOST YOUR COMPETITIVE SPIRIT IN THE LEAST.
...I SWEAR...
...I'LL GET... HARUKA...

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noeri ♀: Background Art/Screentone

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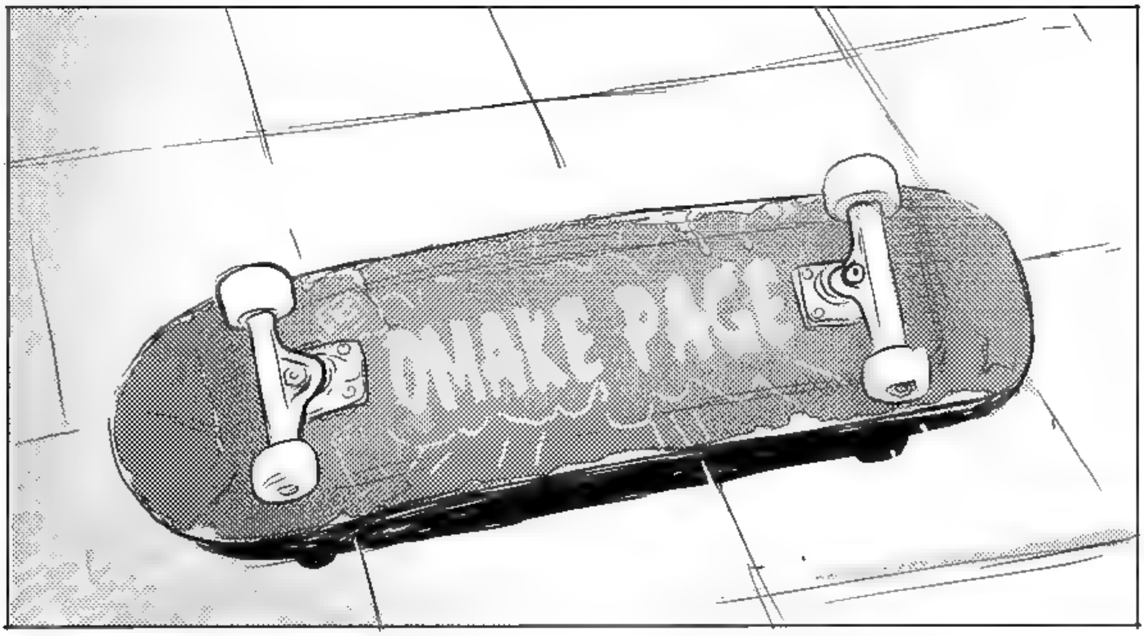
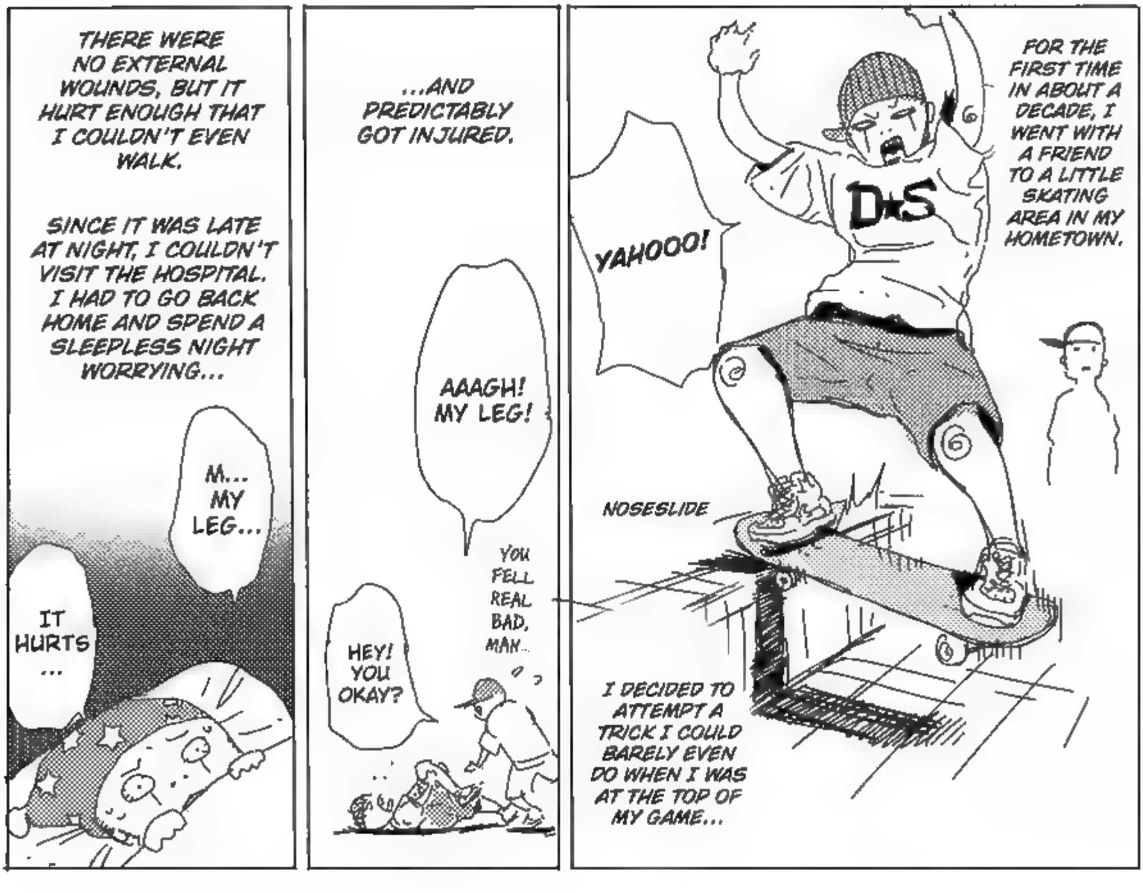
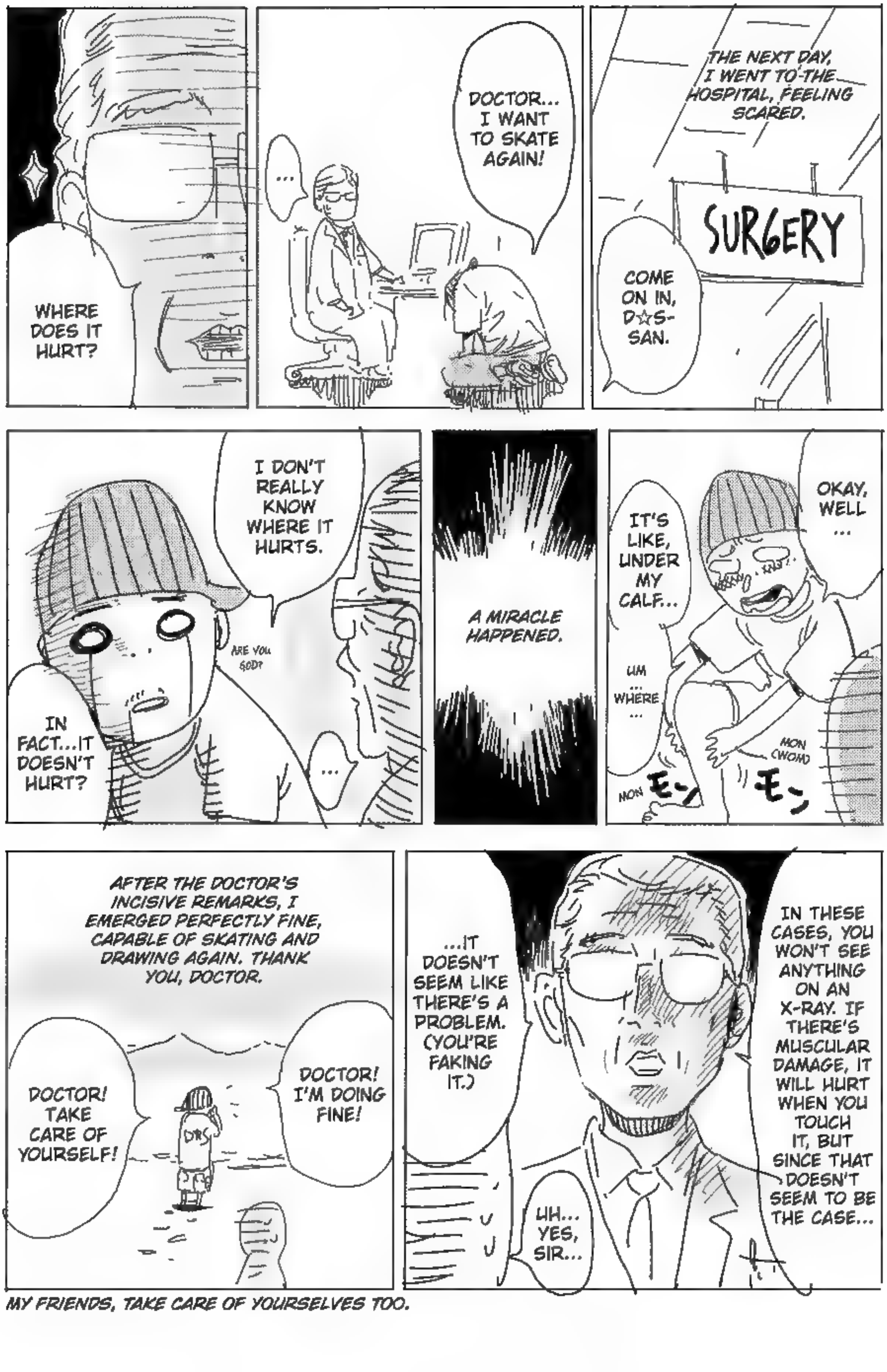


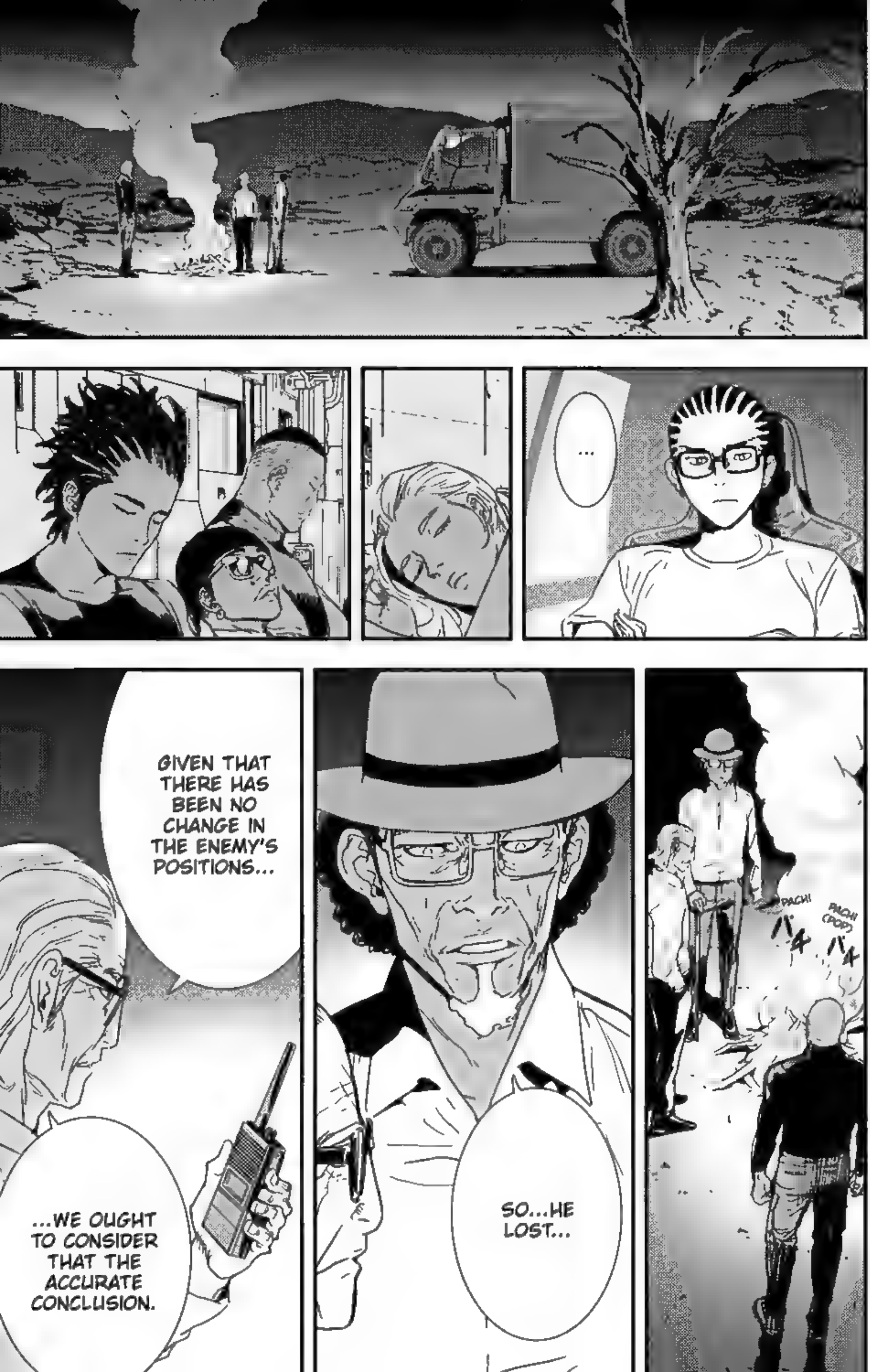
WHEN I WAS IN MIDDLE
SCHOOL, I WAS A SKATER.

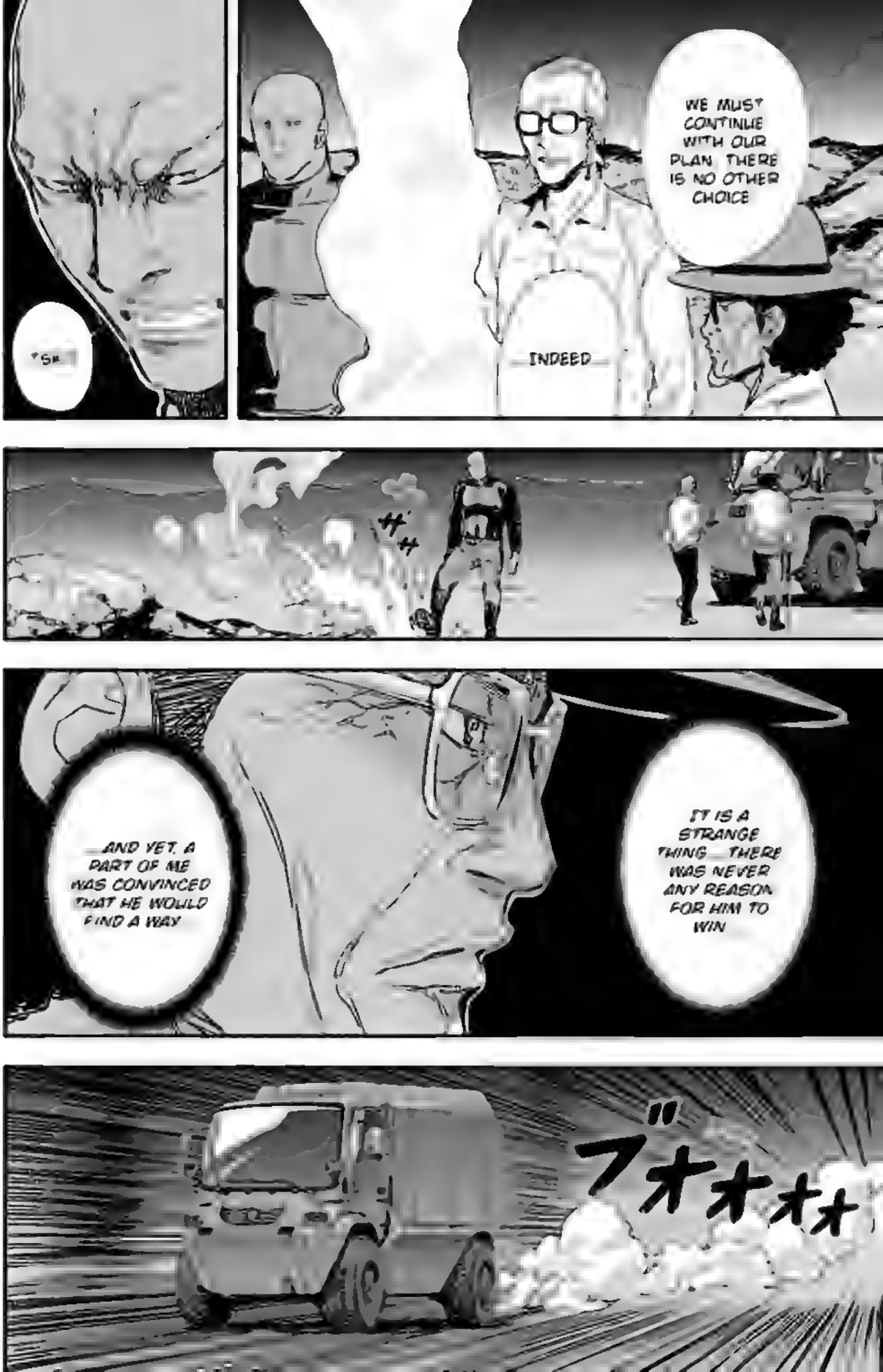

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ABOUT A DECADE, I WENT WITH A FRIEND TO A LITTLE SKATING AREA IN MY HOMETOWN.
YAHOOO!
D·S
NOSESLIDE
I DECIDED TO ATTEMPT A TRICK I COULD BARELY EVEN DO WHEN I WAS AT THE TOP OF MY GAME...
...AND PREDICTABLY GOT INJURED.
AAAGH! MY LEG!
YOU FELL REAL BAD, MAN...
HEY! YOU OKAY?
THERE WERE NO EXTERNAL WOUNDS, BUT IT HURT ENOUGH THAT I COULDN'T EVEN WALK.
SINCE IT WAS LATE AT NIGHT, I COULDN'T VISIT THE HOSPITAL. I HAD TO GO BACK HOME AND SPEND A SLEEPLESS NIGHT WORRYING...
M... MY LEG...
IT HURTS ...


THE NEXT DAY, I WENT TO THE HOSPITAL, FEELING SCARED.
SURGERY
COME ON IN, D☆S-SAN.
DOCTOR... I WANT TO SKATE AGAIN!
...
WHERE DOES IT HURT?
OKAY, WELL ...
IT'S LIKE, UNDER MY CALF...
UM ... WHERE ...
MON (WOM)
モ〜ン
MON
モ〜ン
A MIRACLE HAPPENED.
I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHERE IT HURTS.
ARE YOU GOD?
IN FACT...IT DOESN'T HURT?
...
IN THESE CASES, YOU WON'T SEE ANYTHING ON AN X-RAY. IF THERE'S MUSCULAR DAMAGE, IT WILL HURT WHEN YOU TOUCH IT, BUT SINCE THAT DOESN'T SEEM TO BE THE CASE...
...IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE THERE'S A PROBLEM. (YOU'RE FAKING IT.)
UH... YES, SIR...
AFTER THE DOCTOR'S INCISIVE REMARKS, I EMERGED PERFECTLY FINE, CAPABLE OF SKATING AND DRAWING AGAIN. THANK YOU, DOCTOR.
DOCTOR! I'M DOING FINE!
DOCTOR! TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF!
DRS

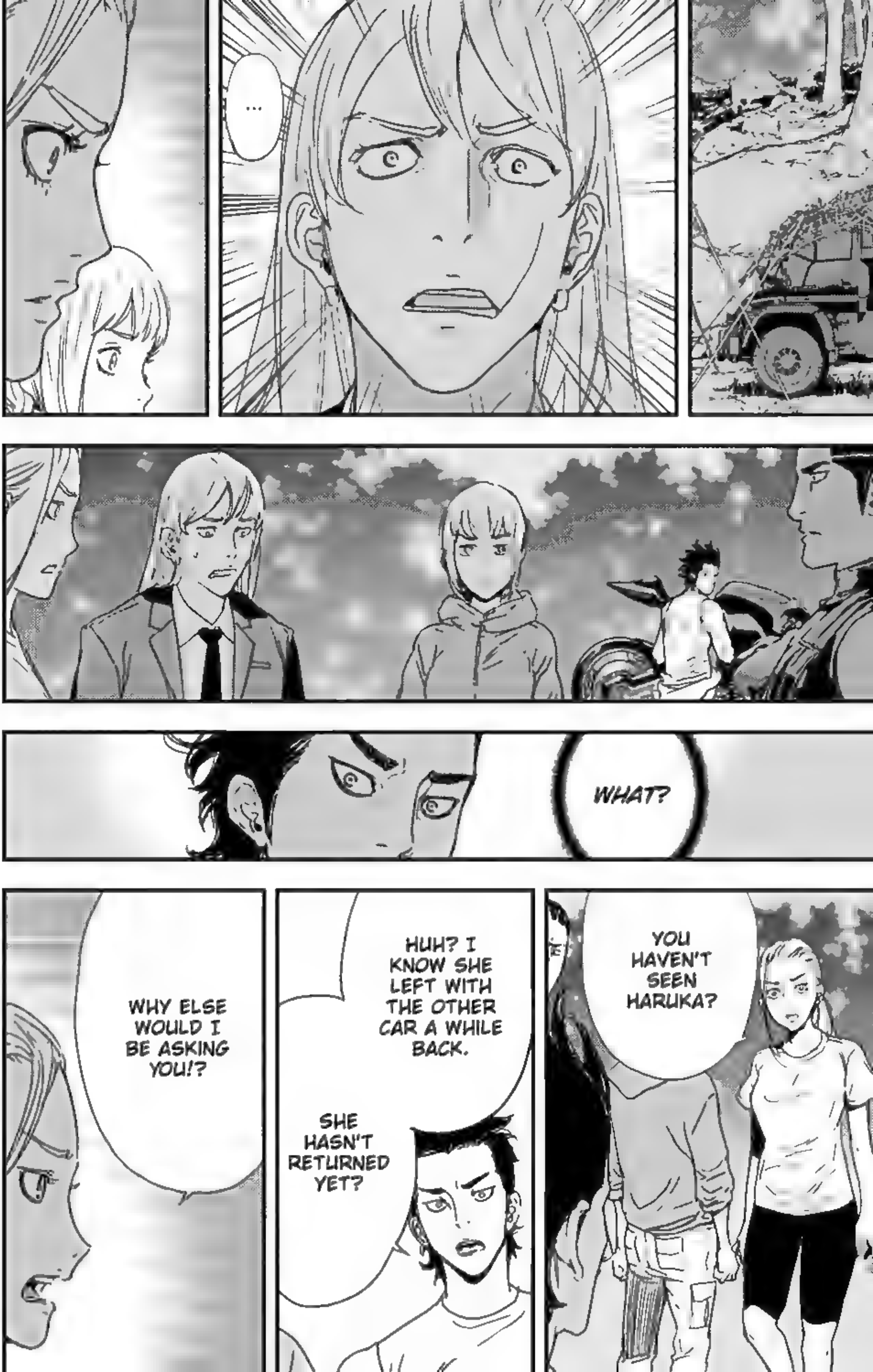
MY FRIENDS, TAKE CARE OF YOURSELVES TOO.

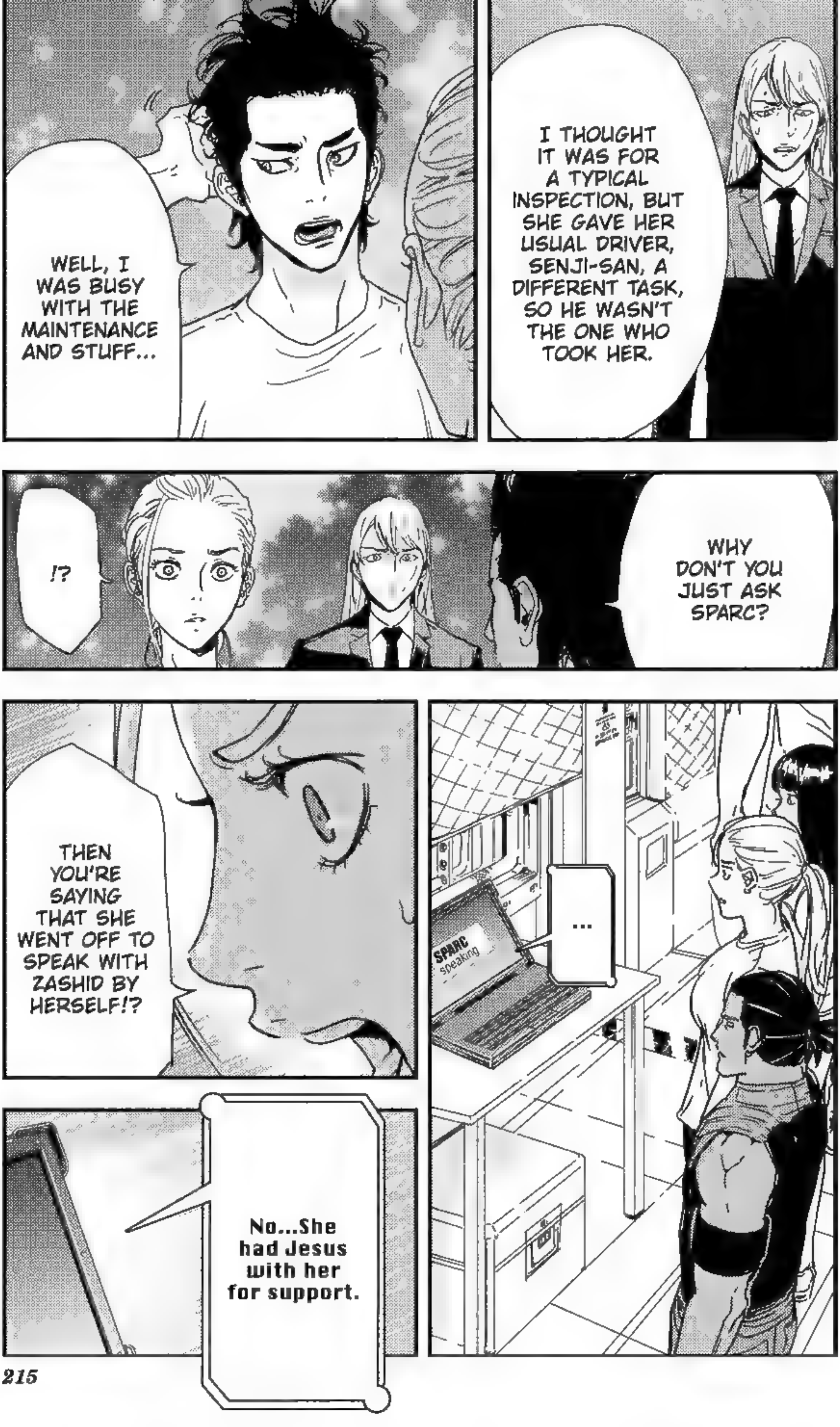
Until Death do us Part

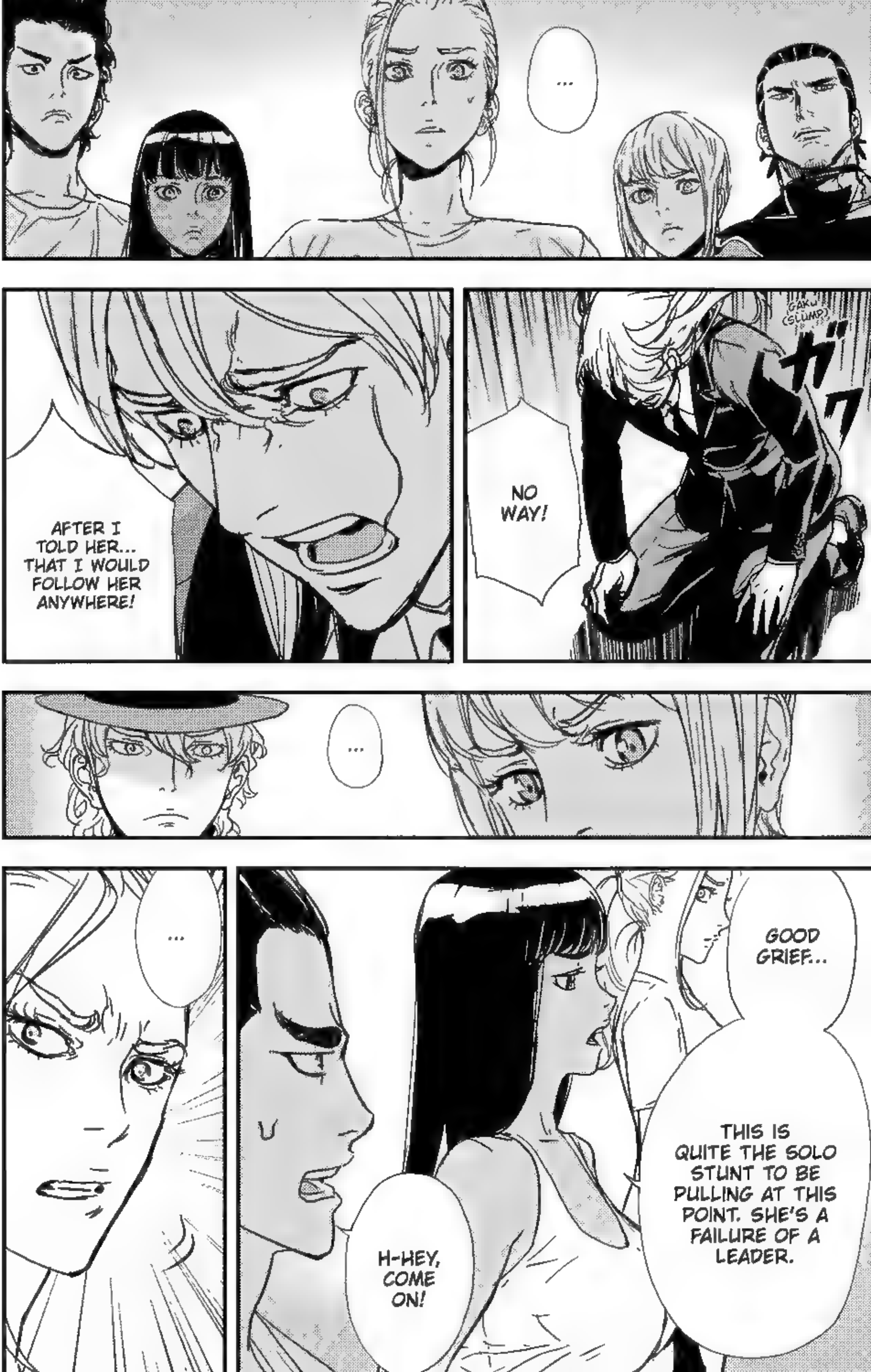

...
PACHI
パチ
PACHI (POP)
パチ
SO...HE LOST...
GIVEN THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO CHANGE IN THE ENEMY'S POSITIONS...
...WE OUGHT TO CONSIDER THAT THE ACCURATE CONCLUSION.

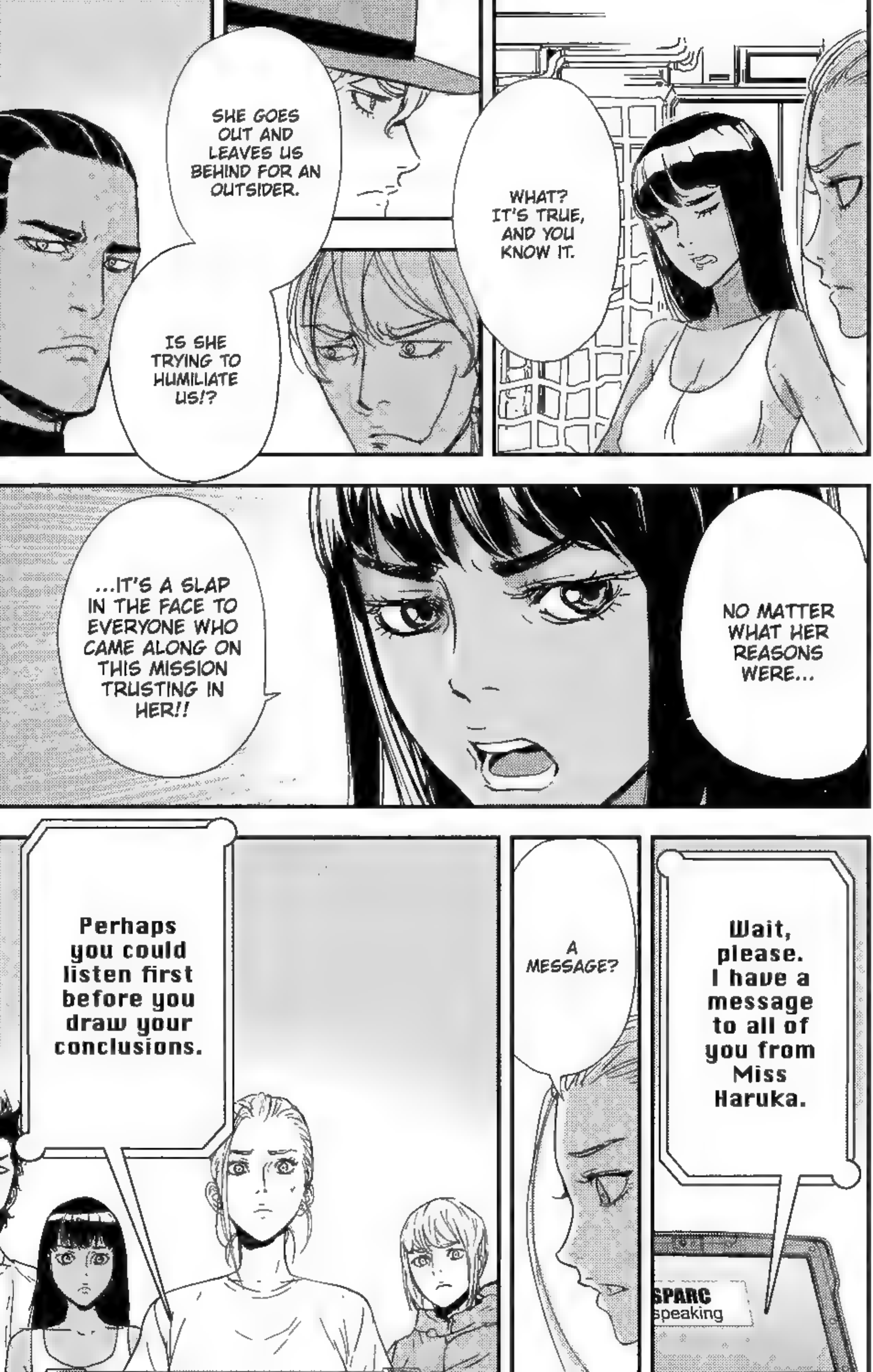

WE MUST CONTINUE WITH OUR PLAN. THERE IS NO OTHER CHOICE
...INDEED...
*Sk
ザザ
IT IS A STRANGE THING... THERE WAS NEVER ANY REASON FOR HIM TO WIN
...AND YET, A PART OF ME WAS CONVINCED THAT HE WOULD FIND A WAY
ブオオオオ

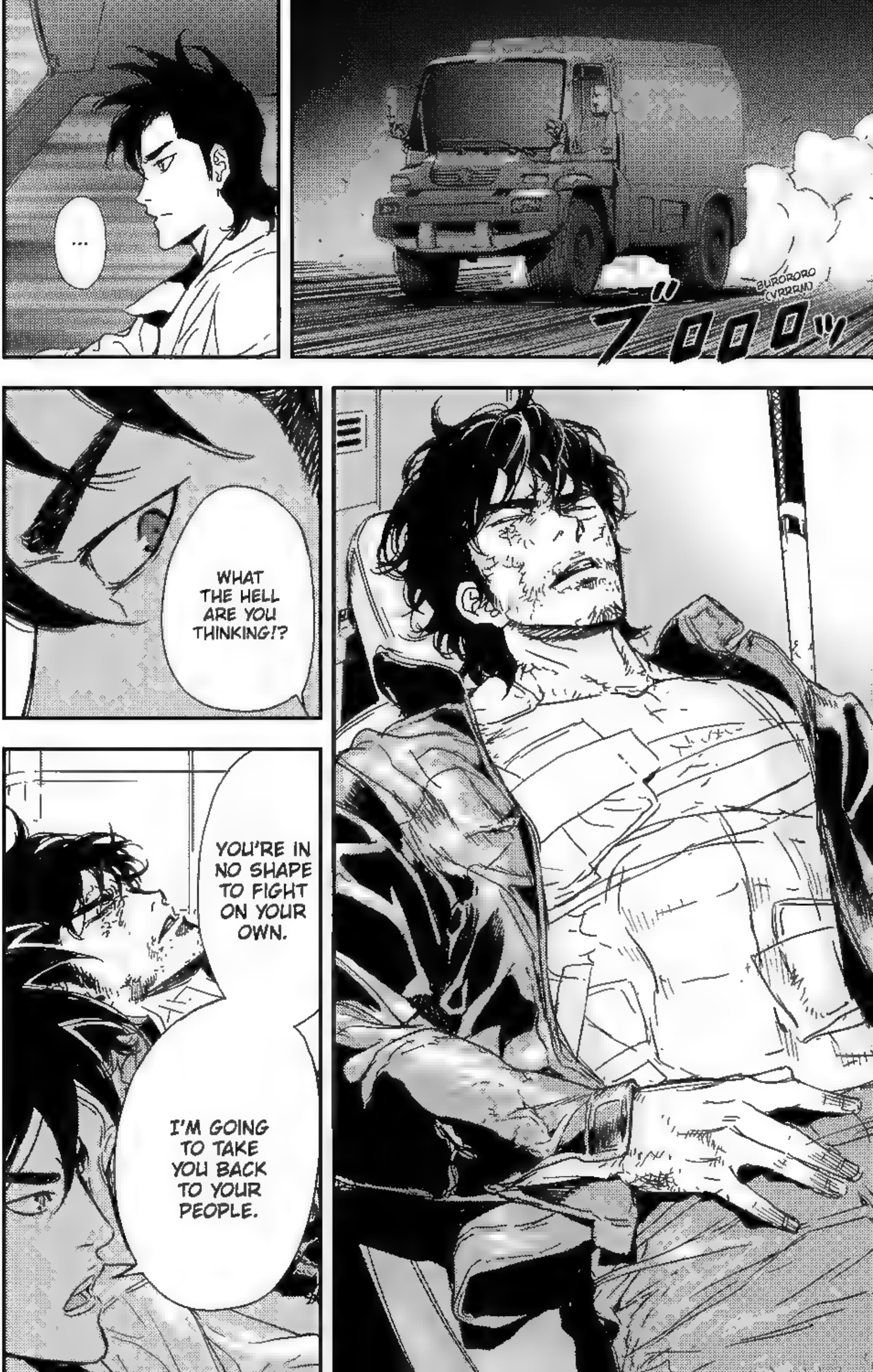
chapter 203

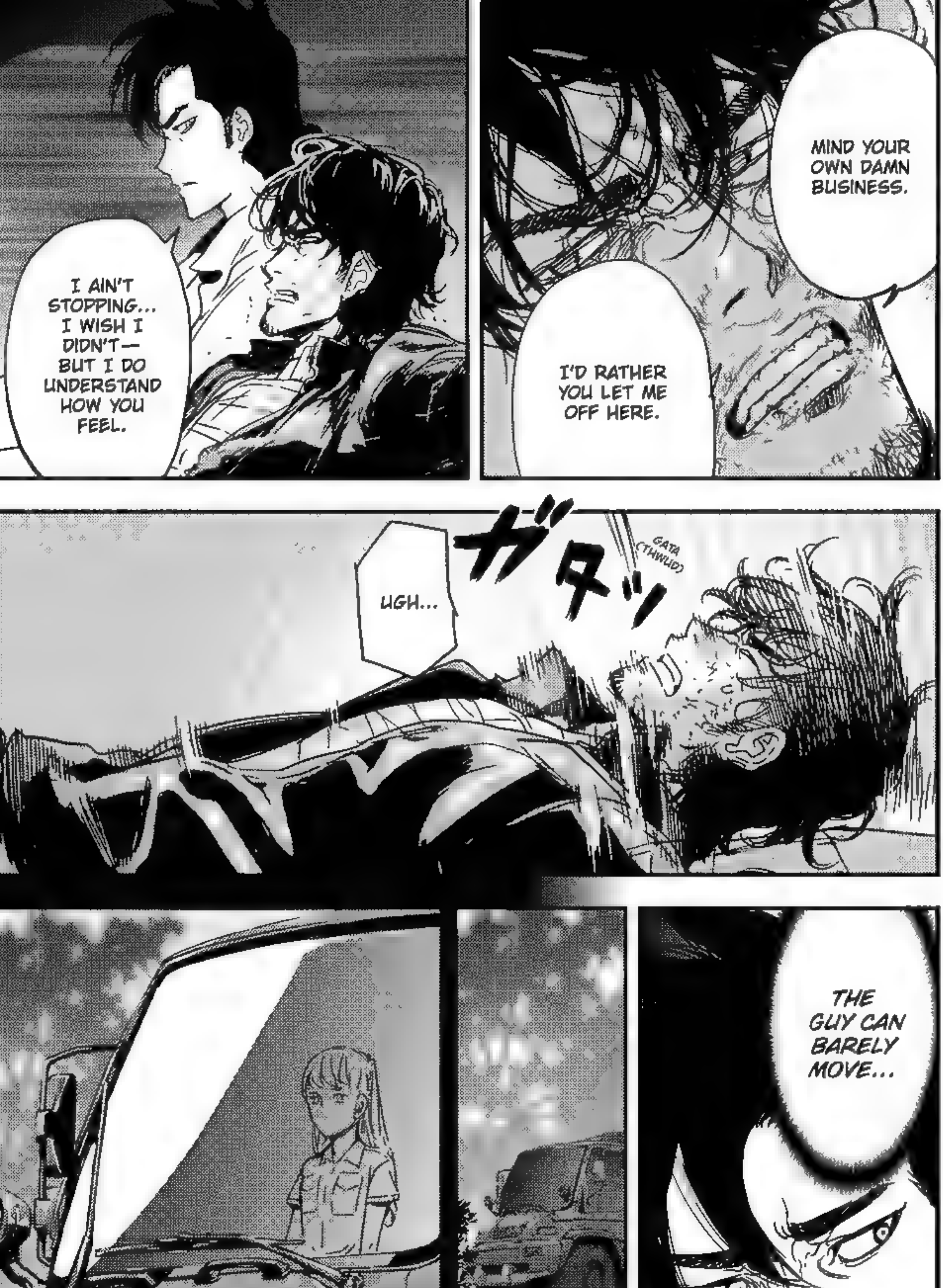

...
WHAT?
YOU HAVEN'T SEEN HARUKA?
HUH? I KNOW SHE LEFT WITH THE OTHER CAR A WHILE BACK.
SHE HASN'T RETURNED YET?
WHY ELSE WOULD I BE ASKING YOU!?

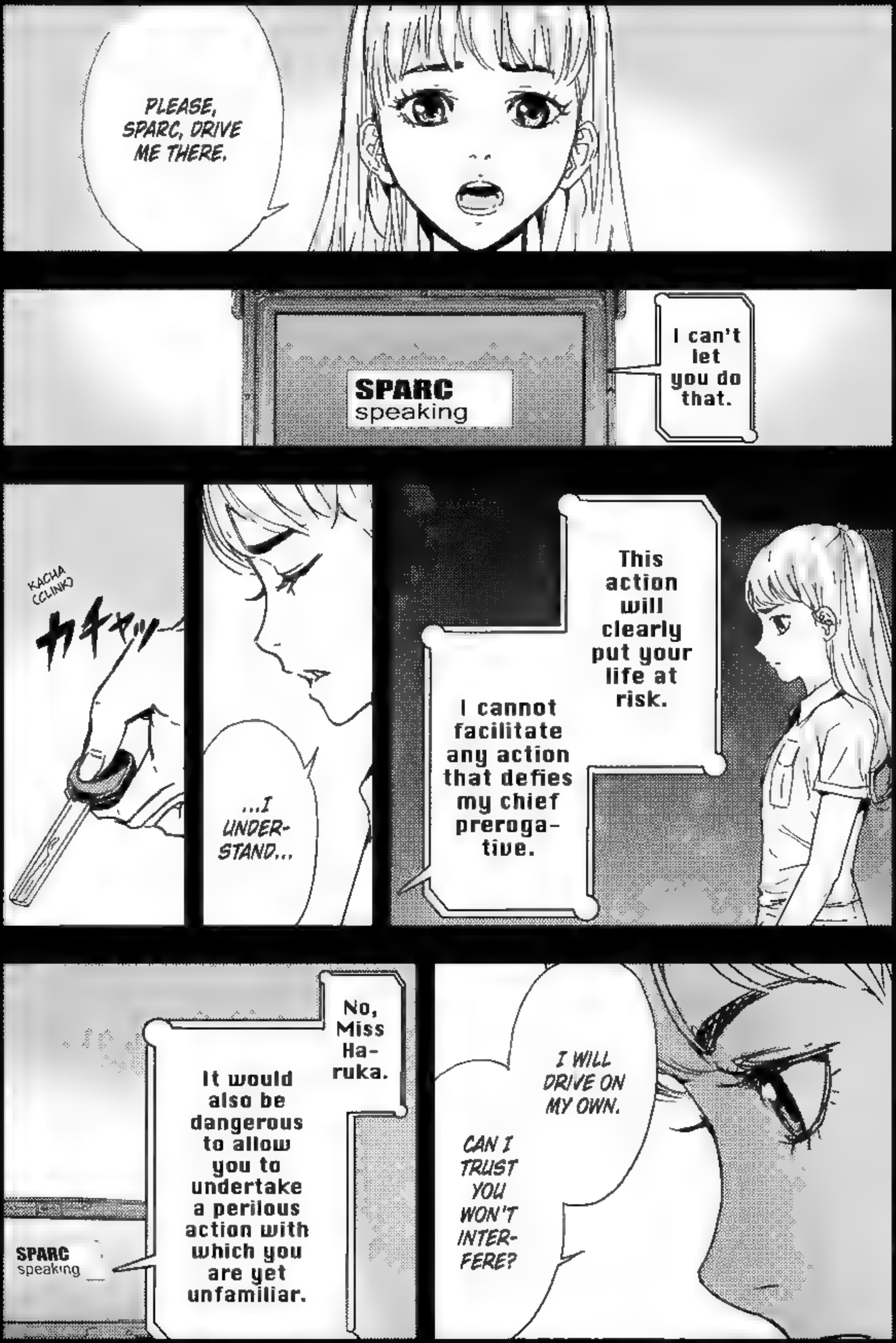

I THOUGHT IT WAS FOR A TYPICAL INSPECTION, BUT SHE GAVE HER USUAL DRIVER, SENJI-SAN, A DIFFERENT TASK, SO HE WASN'T THE ONE WHO TOOK HER.
WELL, I WAS BUSY WITH THE MAINTENANCE AND STUFF...
WHY DON'T YOU JUST ASK SPARC?
!?
SPARC speaking
...
THEN YOU'RE SAYING THAT SHE WENT OFF TO SPEAK WITH ZASHID BY HERSELF!?
No...She had Jesus with her for support.

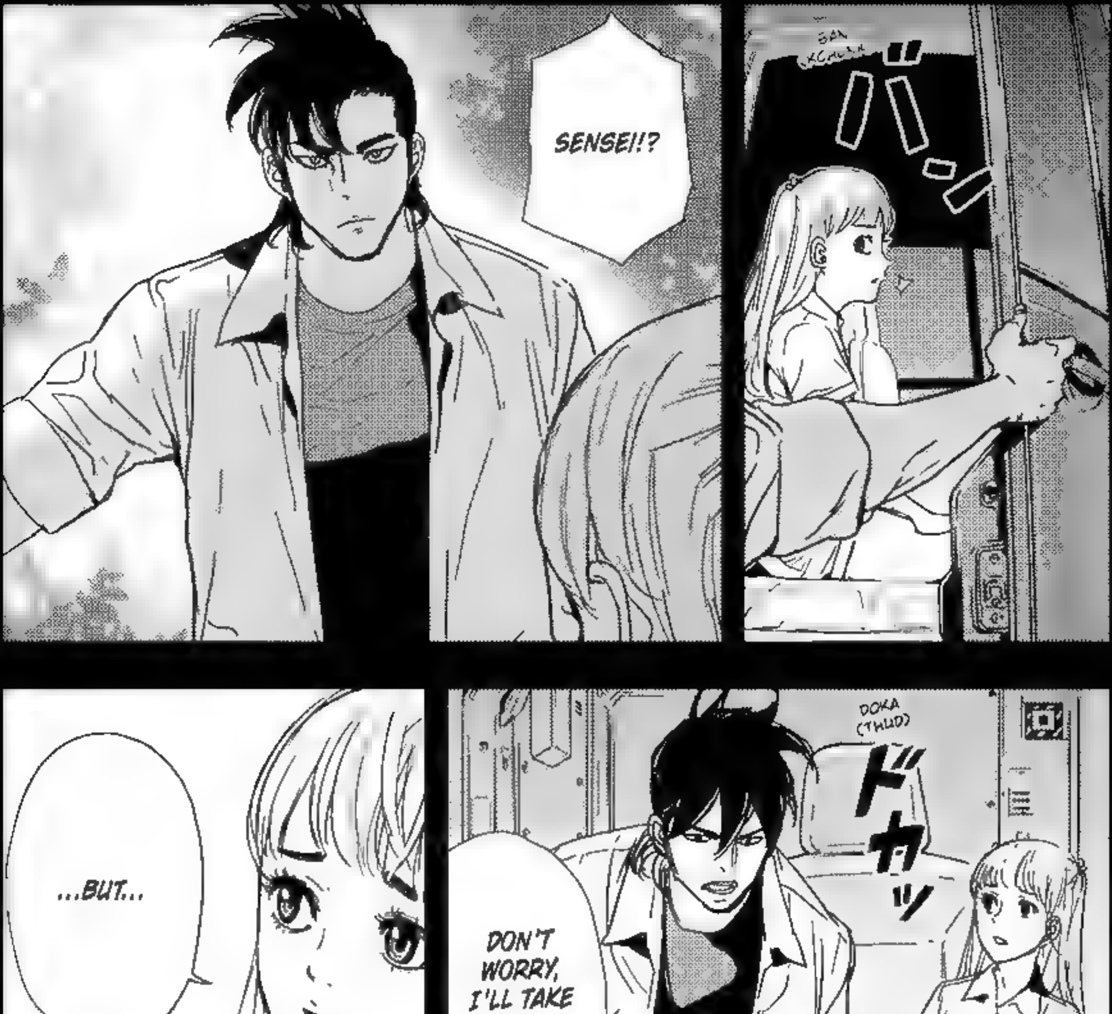

...
GAKU (SLUMP)
NO WAY!
AFTER I TOLD HER... THAT I WOULD FOLLOW HER ANYWHERE!
...
GOOD GRIEF...
THIS IS QUITE THE SOLO STUNT TO BE PULLING AT THIS POINT. SHE'S A FAILURE OF A LEADER.
H-HEY, COME ON!
...

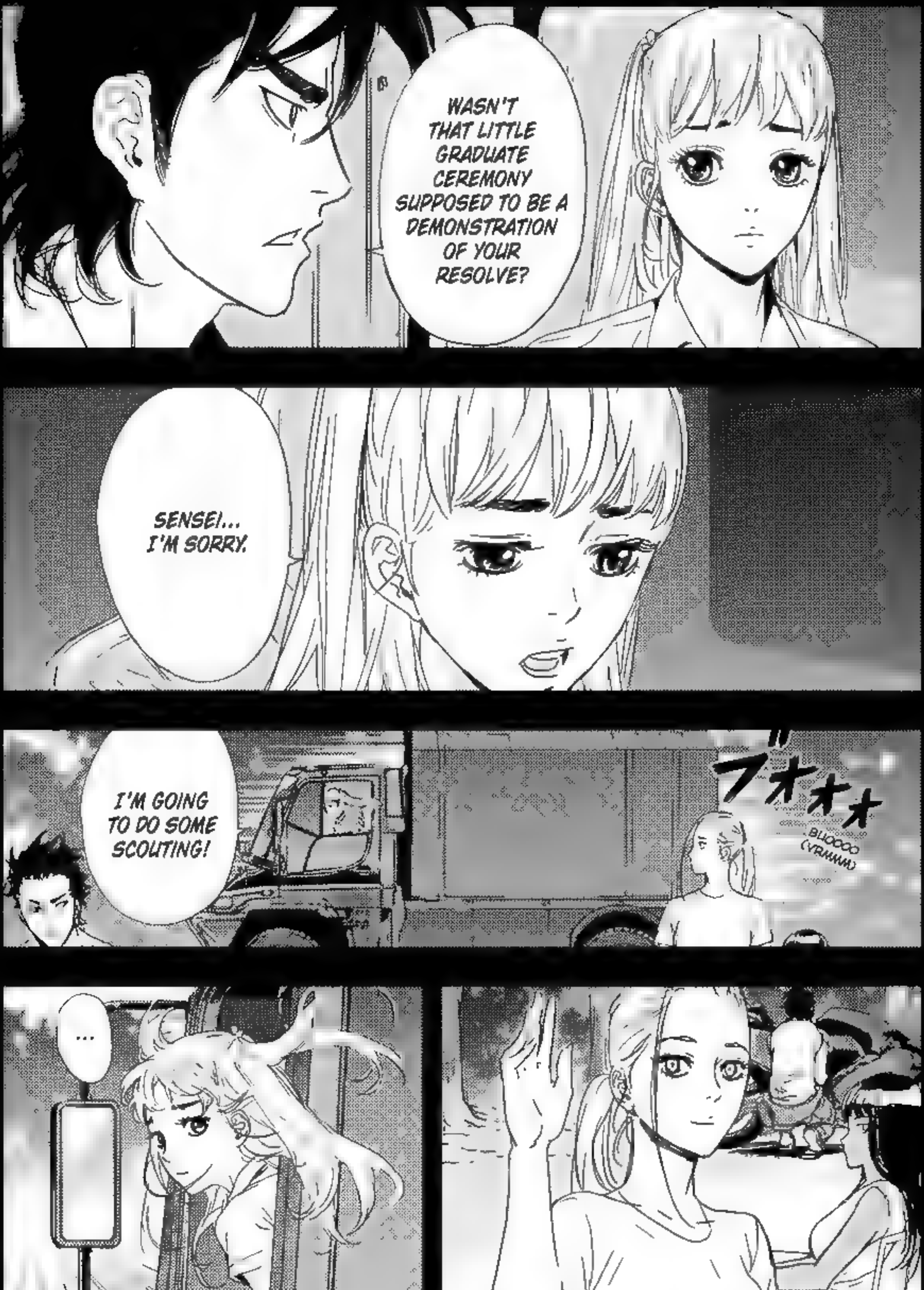

WHAT? IT'S TRUE, AND YOU KNOW IT.
SHE GOES OUT AND LEAVES US BEHIND FOR AN OUTSIDER.
IS SHE TRYING TO HUMILIATE US!?
NO MATTER WHAT HER REASONS WERE...
...IT'S A SLAP IN THE FACE TO EVERYONE WHO CAME ALONG ON THIS MISSION TRUSTING IN HER!!
Wait, please. I have a message to all of you from Miss Haruka.
SPARC speaking
A MESSAGE?
Perhaps you could listen first before you draw your conclusions.

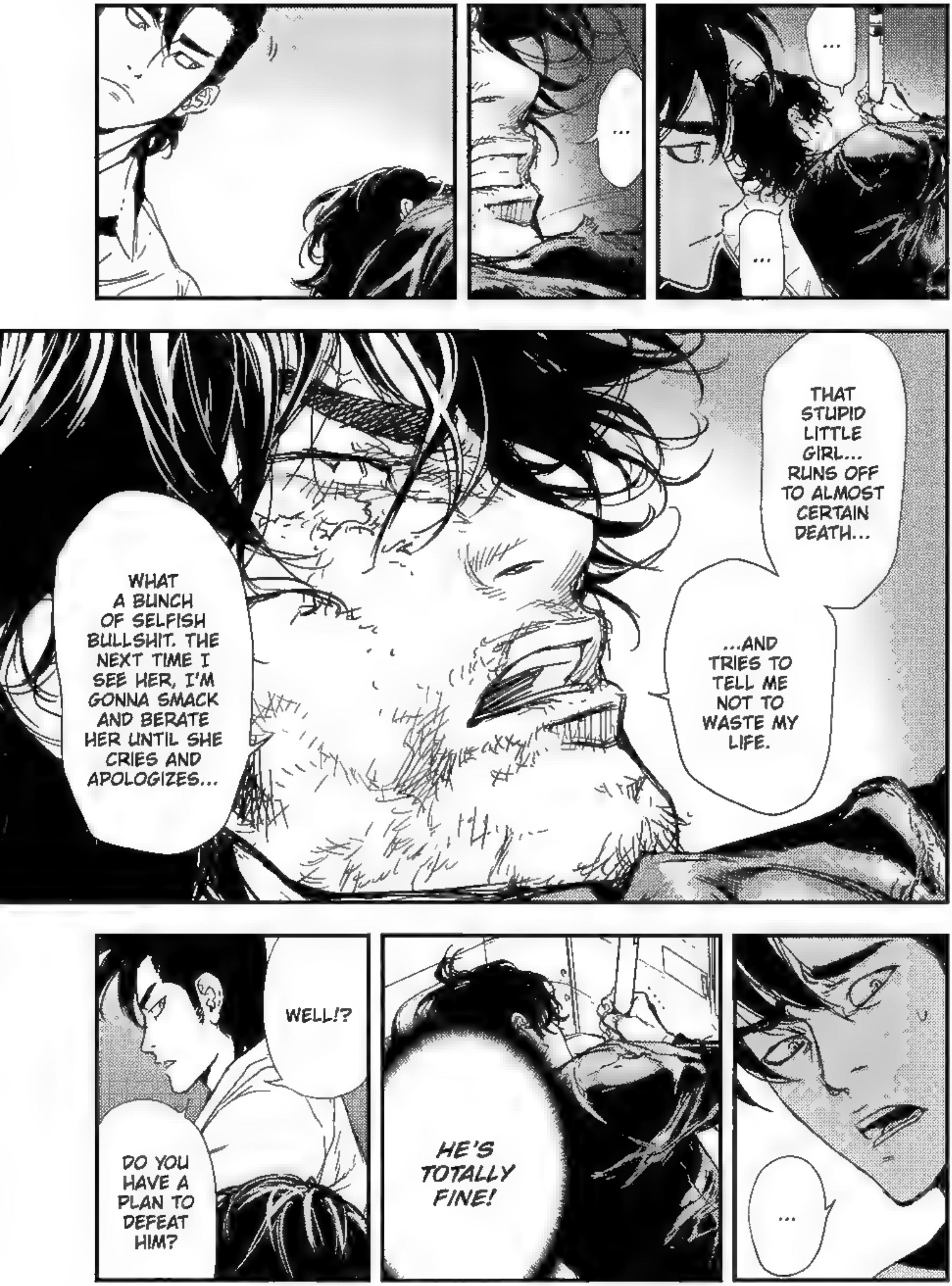

ブロロロッ
BURORORO (VRRRM)
...
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU THINKING!?
YOU'RE IN NO SHAPE TO FIGHT ON YOUR OWN.
I'M GOING TO TAKE YOU BACK TO YOUR PEOPLE.

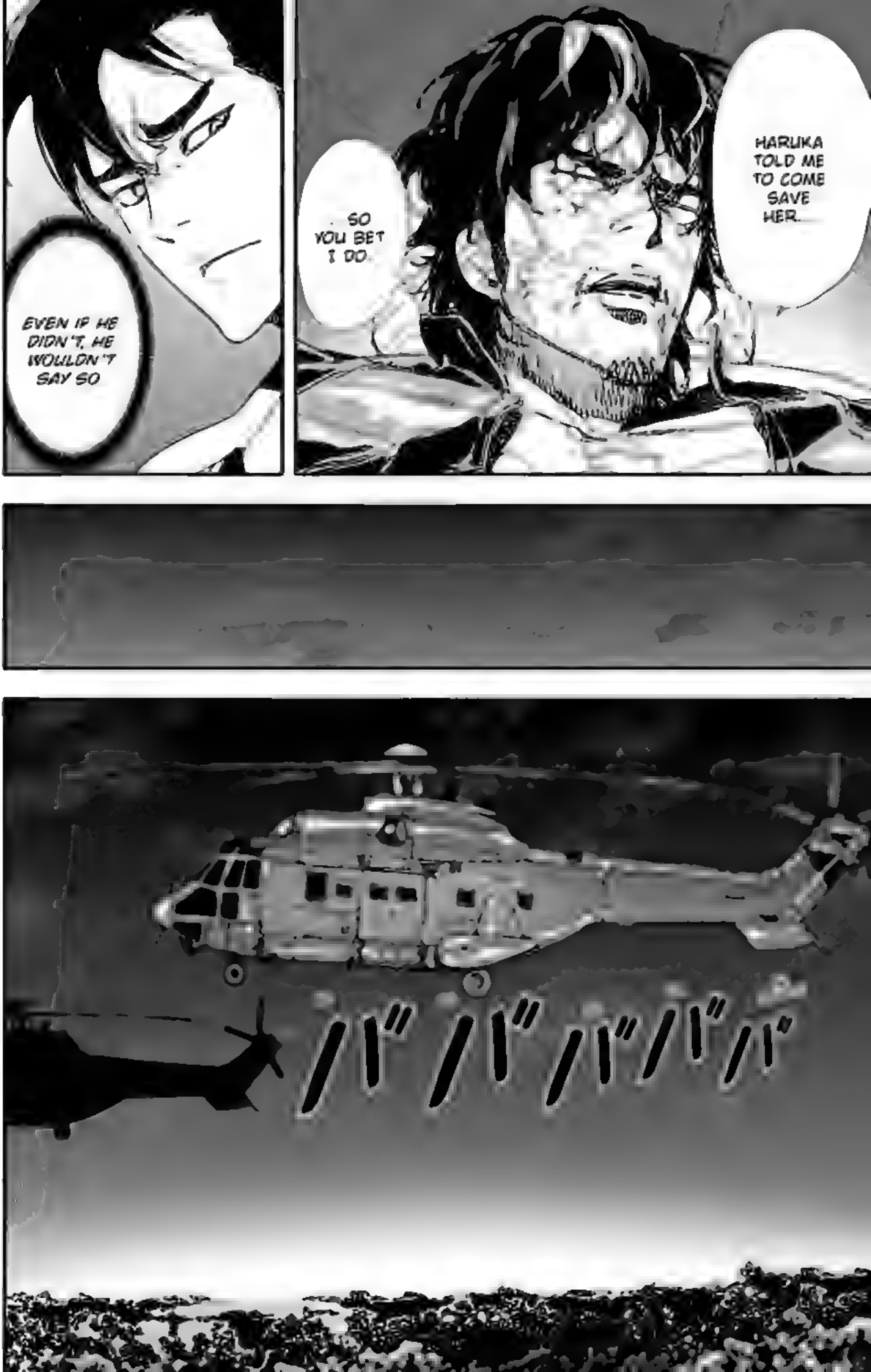

MIND YOUR OWN DAMN BUSINESS.
I'D RATHER YOU LET ME OFF HERE.
I AIN'T STOPPING... I WISH I DIDN'T— BUT I DO UNDERSTAND HOW YOU FEEL.
ガタッ
GATA (THWUD)
UGH...
THE GUY CAN BARELY MOVE...

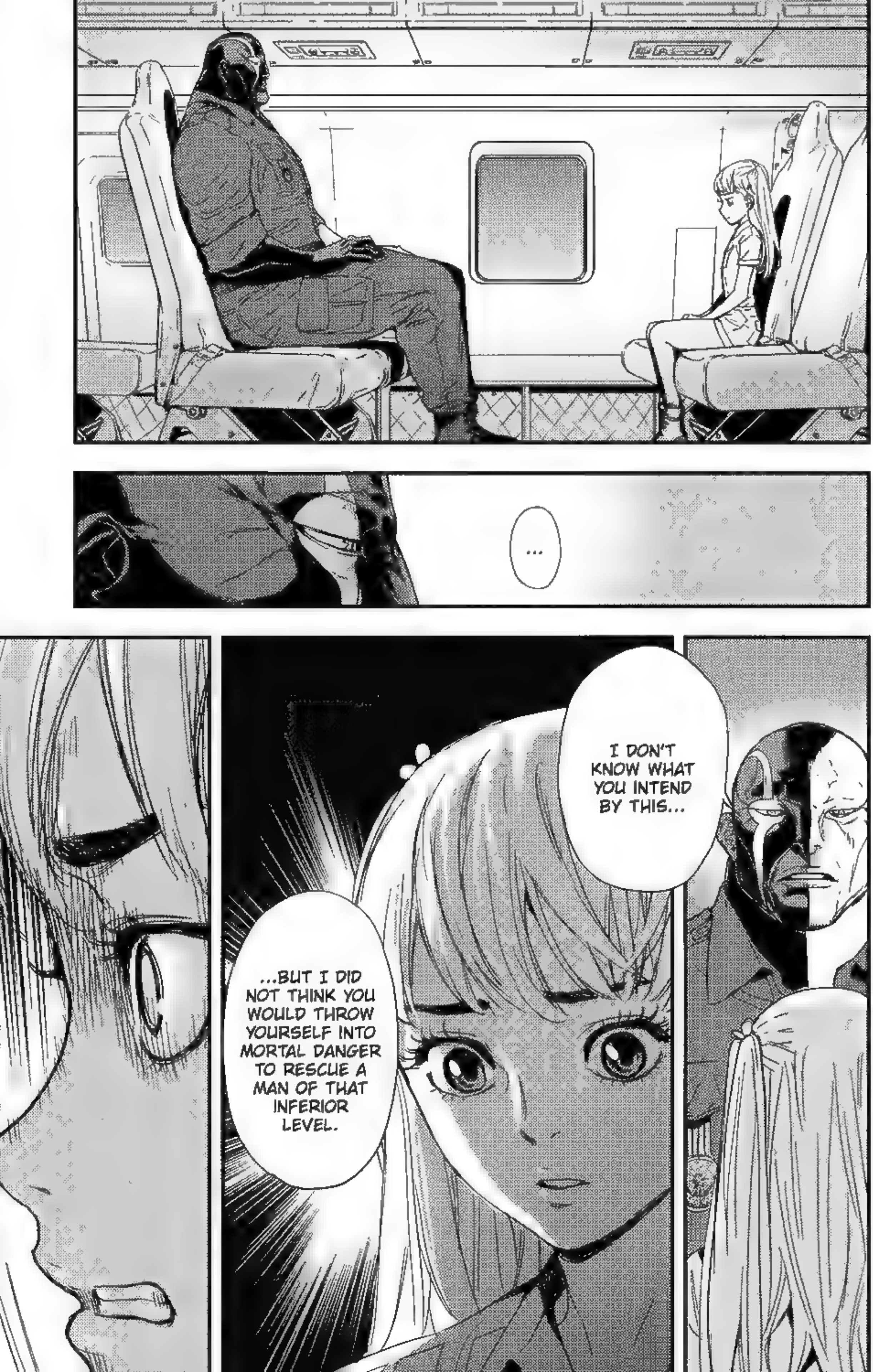

PLEASE, SPARC, DRIVE ME THERE.
SPARC speaking
I can't let you do that.
This action will clearly put your life at risk.
I cannot facilitate any action that defies my chief prerogative.
...I UNDERSTAND...
KACHA (CLINK)
カチャッ
I WILL DRIVE ON MY OWN.
CAN I TRUST YOU WON'T INTERFERE?
No, Miss Haruka.
It would also be dangerous to allow you to undertake a perilous action with which you are yet unfamiliar.
SPARC speaking

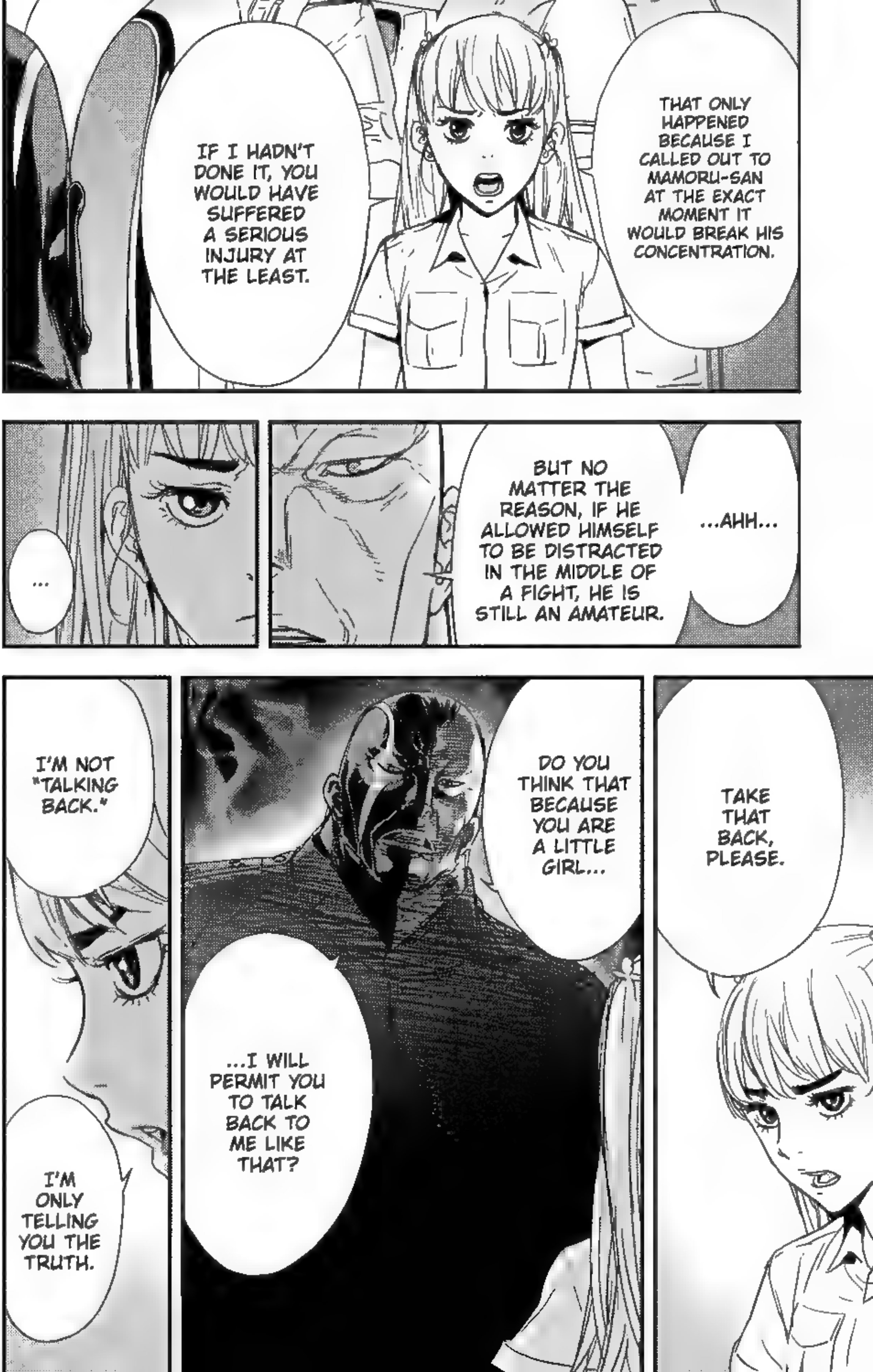

BAN (KCHUNK)
バーッ
SENSE!!?
DOKA (THUD)
ドカッ
DON'T WORRY, I'LL TAKE YOU.
...BUT...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO DO, BUT YOU'RE A GRADUATE NOW, AND IT'S YOUR CHOICE.
TEACHER'S GOT NO RIGHT TO STOP YOU OR TELL YOU WHAT TO DO. IS THAT ALL RIGHT? PLUS...

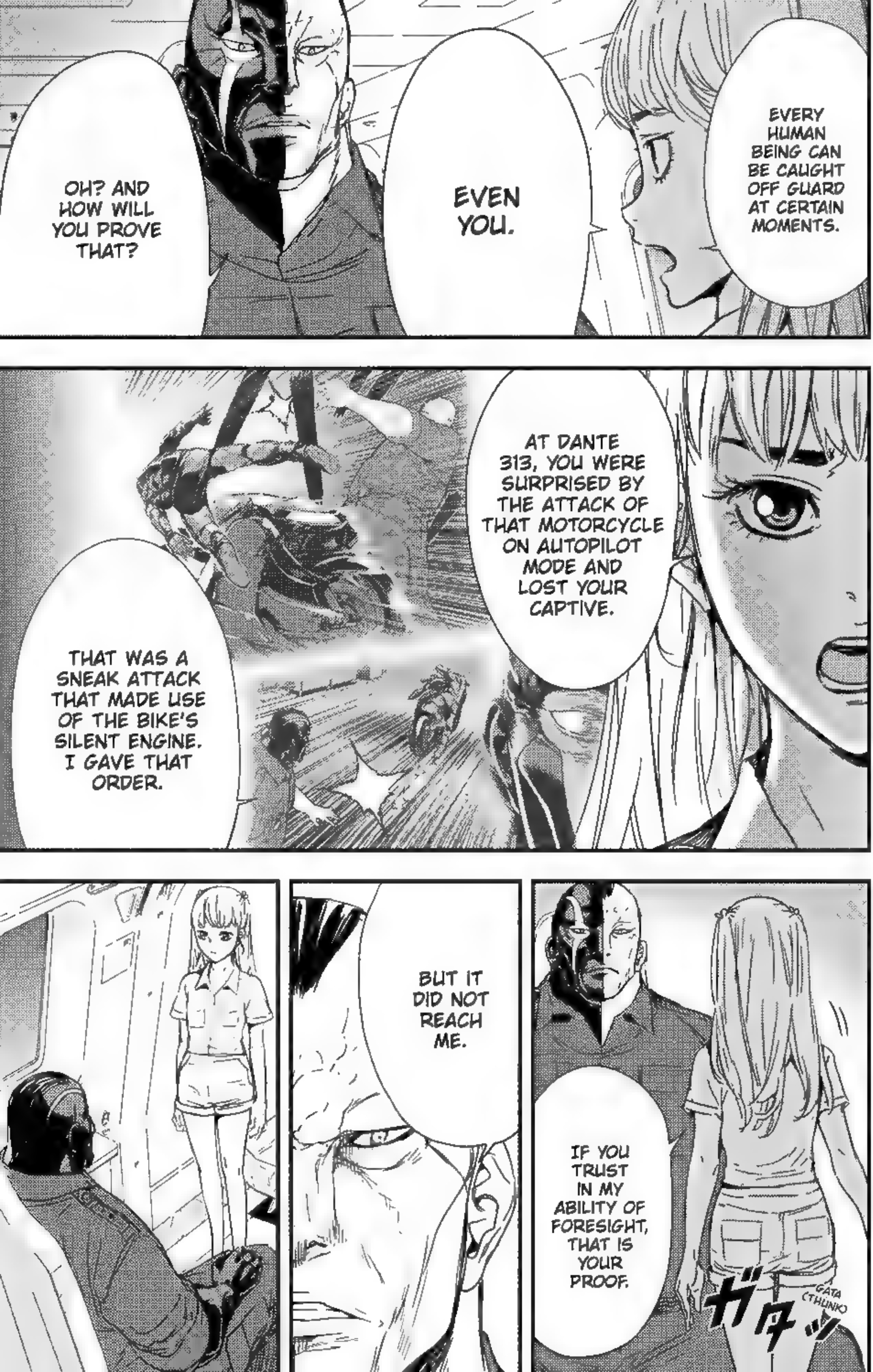

WASN'T THAT LITTLE GRADUATE CEREMONY SUPPOSED TO BE A DEMONSTRATION OF YOUR RESOLVE?
SENSEI... I'M SORRY.
ブオオオ
BUOOOO (VRMMM)
I'M GOING TO DO SOME SCOUTING!
...

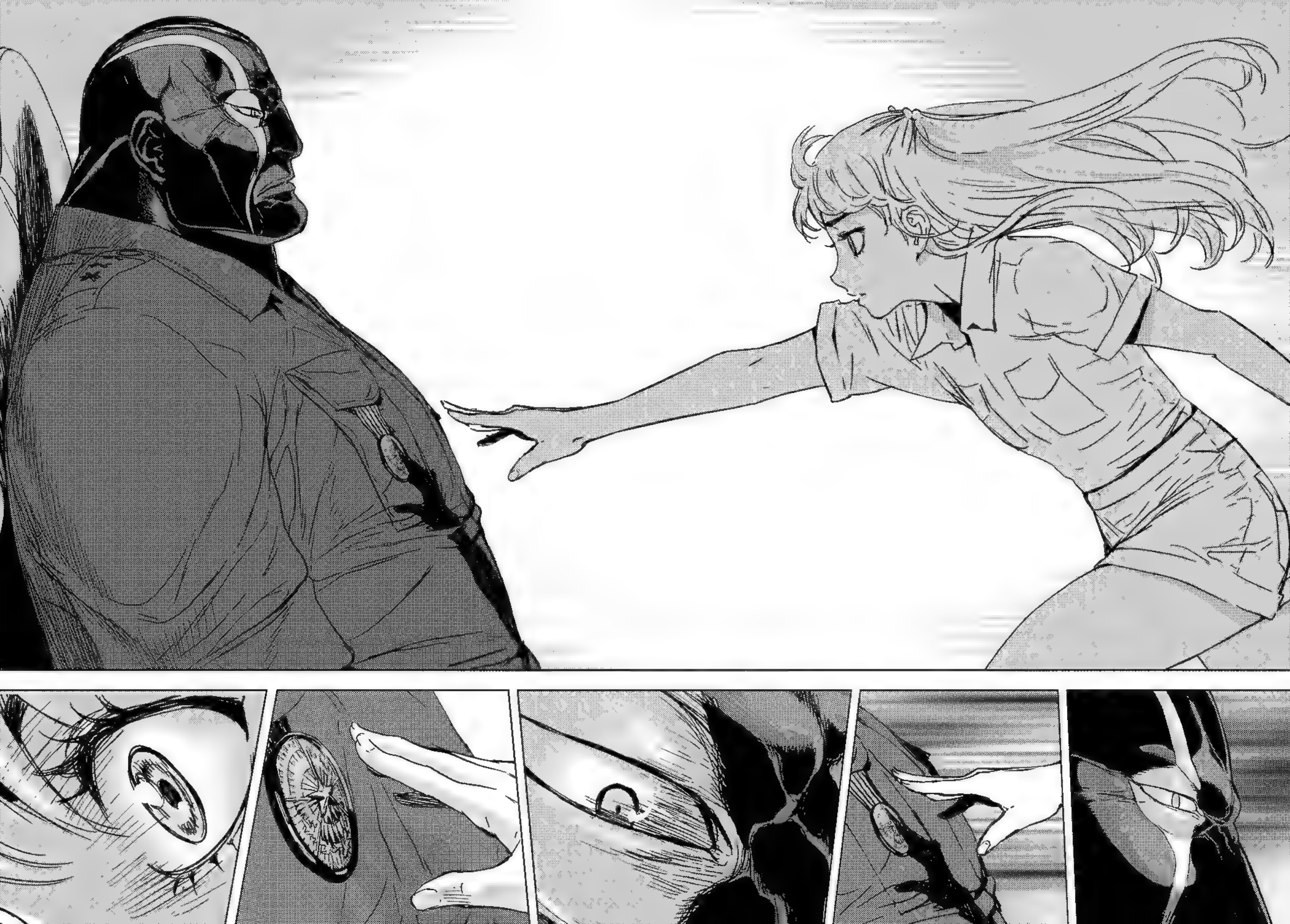

...
...
...
THAT STUPID LITTLE GIRL... RUNS OFF TO ALMOST CERTAIN DEATH...
...AND TRIES TO TELL ME NOT TO WASTE MY LIFE.
WHAT A BUNCH OF SELFISH BULLSHIT. THE NEXT TIME I SEE HER, I'M GONNA SMACK AND BERATE HER UNTIL SHE CRIES AND APOLOGIZES...
...
HE'S TOTALLY FINE!
WELL!?
DO YOU HAVE A PLAN TO DEFEAT HIM?

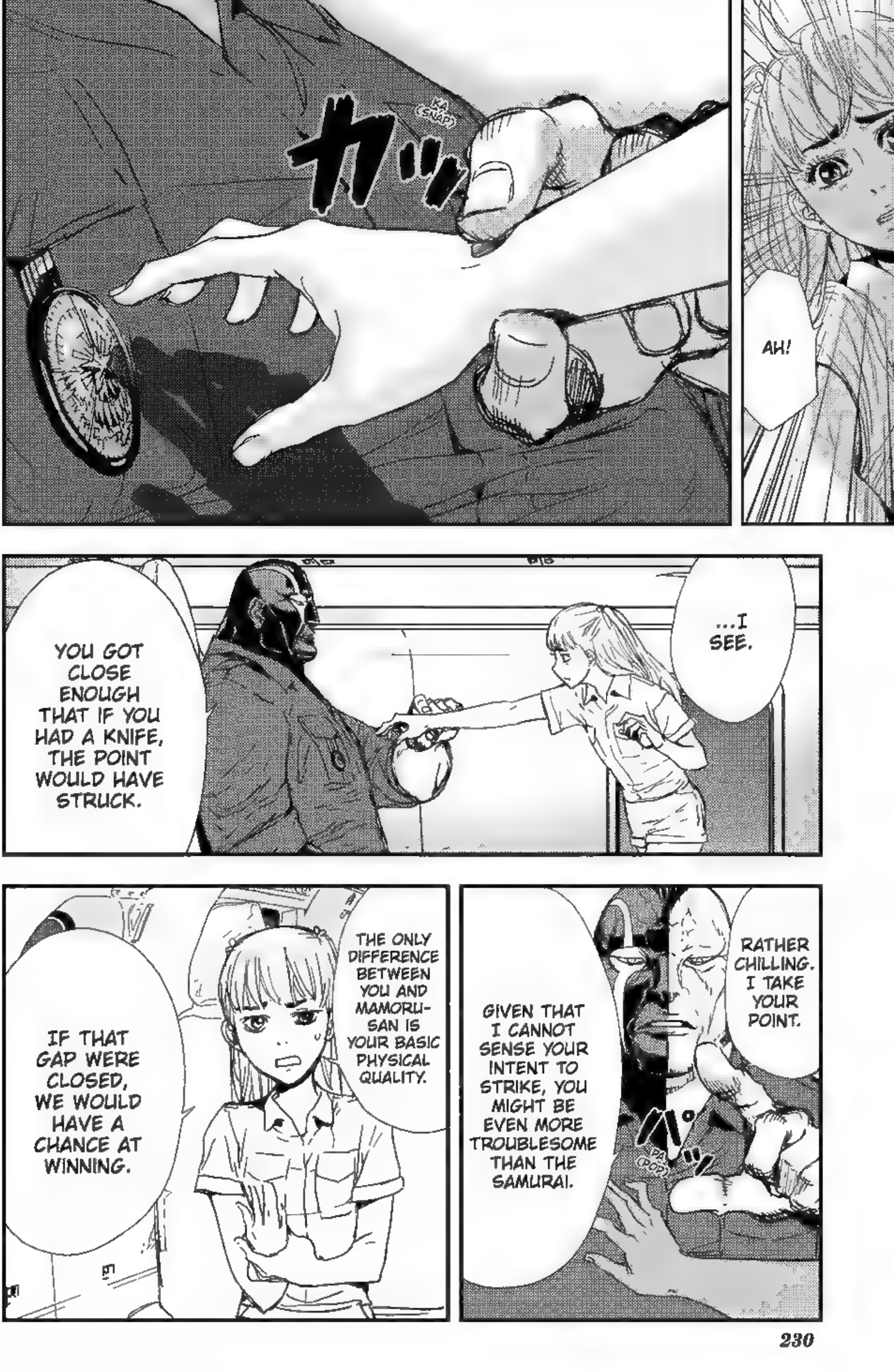

HARUKA TOLD ME TO COME SAVE HER...
...SO YOU BET I DO.
EVEN IF HE DIDN'T, HE WOULDN'T SAY SO
バババババ

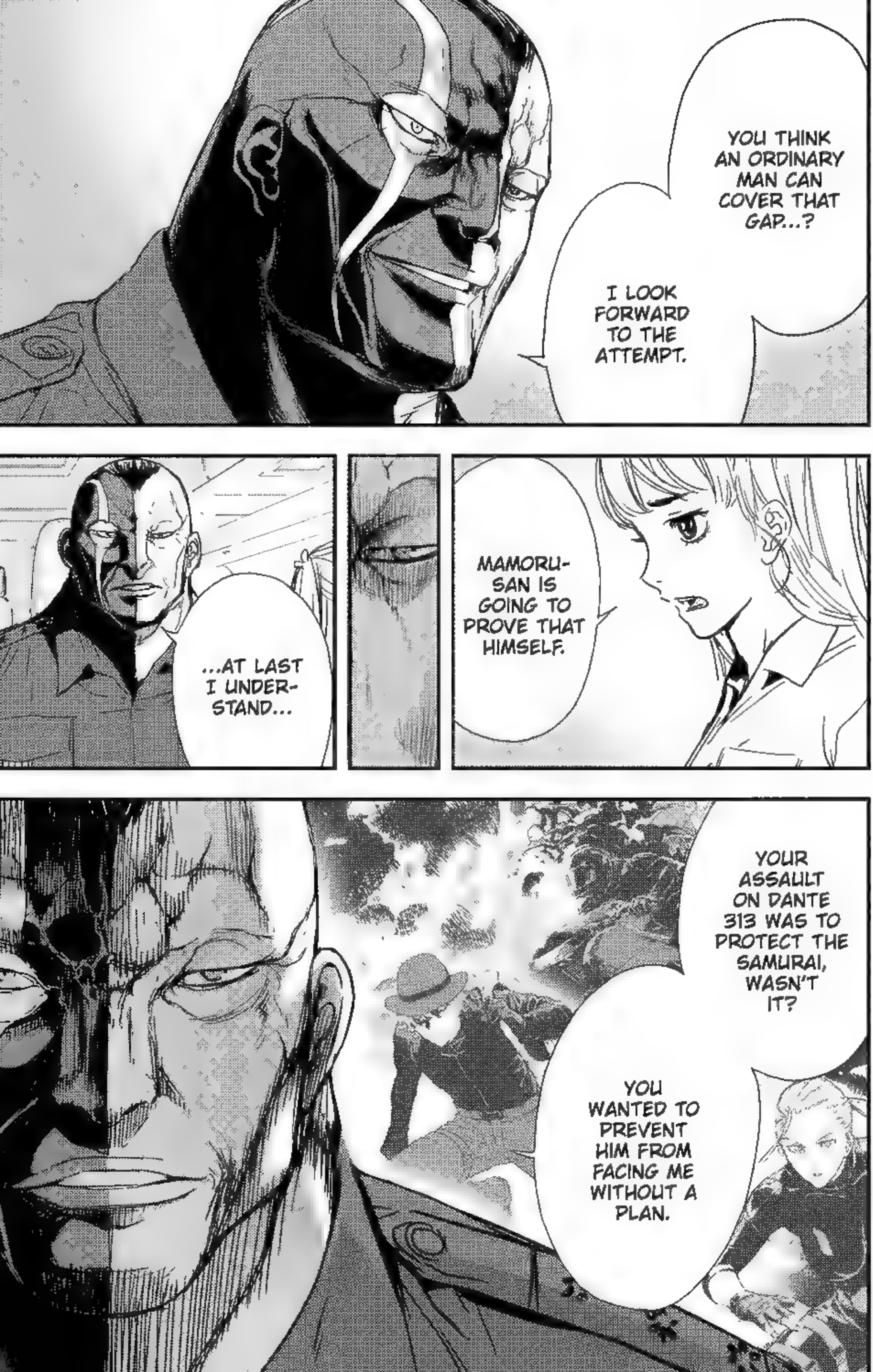

...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU INTEND BY THIS...
...BUT I DID NOT THINK YOU WOULD THROW YOURSELF INTO MORTAL DANGER TO RESCUE A MAN OF THAT INFERIOR LEVEL.

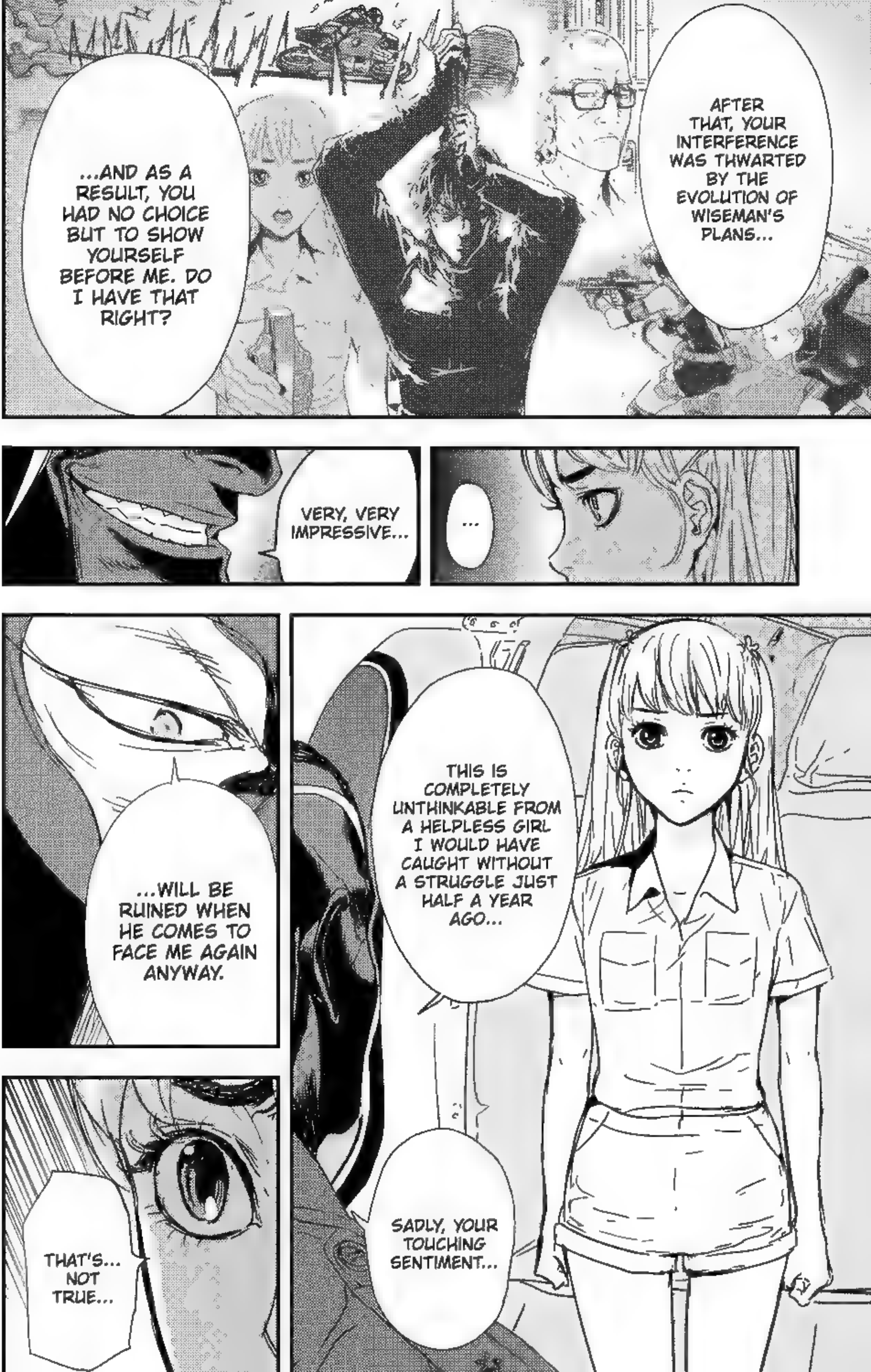

THAT ONLY HAPPENED BECAUSE I CALLED OUT TO MAMORU-SAN AT THE EXACT MOMENT IT WOULD BREAK HIS CONCENTRATION.
IF I HADN'T DONE IT, YOU WOULD HAVE SUFFERED A SERIOUS INJURY AT THE LEAST.
...AHH...
BUT NO MATTER THE REASON, IF HE ALLOWED HIMSELF TO BE DISTRACTED IN THE MIDDLE OF A FIGHT, HE IS STILL AN AMATEUR.
...
TAKE THAT BACK, PLEASE.
DO YOU THINK THAT BECAUSE YOU ARE A LITTLE GIRL...
...I WILL PERMIT YOU TO TALK BACK TO ME LIKE THAT?
I'M NOT "TALKING BACK."
I'M ONLY TELLING YOU THE TRUTH.

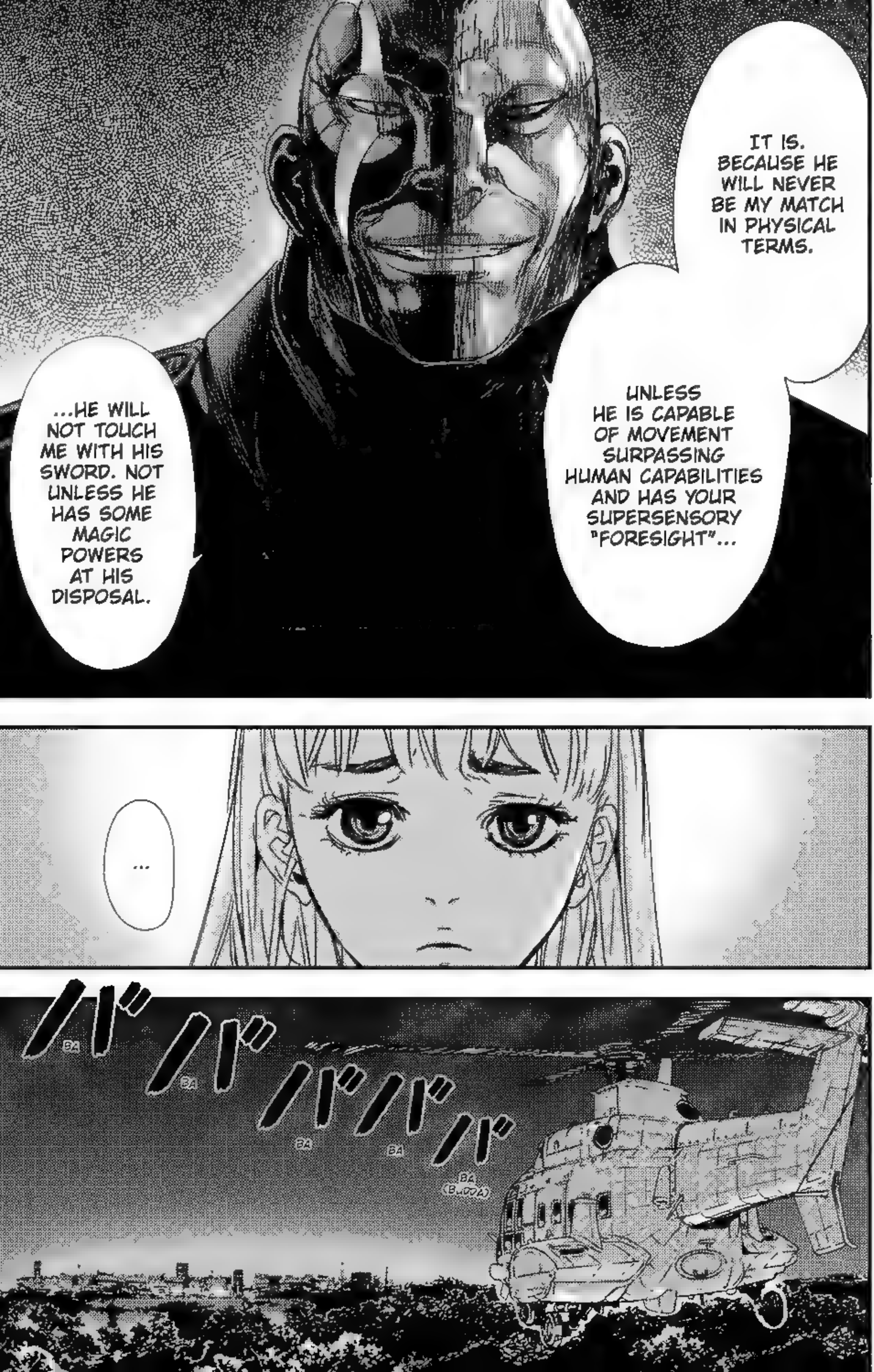

EVERY HUMAN BEING CAN BE CAUGHT OFF GUARD AT CERTAIN MOMENTS.
EVEN YOU.
OH? AND HOW WILL YOU PROVE THAT?
AT DANTE 313, YOU WERE SURPRISED BY THE ATTACK OF THAT MOTORCYCLE ON AUTOPILOT MODE AND LOST YOUR CAPTIVE.
THAT WAS A SNEAK ATTACK THAT MADE USE OF THE BIKE'S SILENT ENGINE. I GAVE THAT ORDER.
IF YOU TRUST IN MY ABILITY OF FORESIGHT, THAT IS YOUR PROOF.
ガタッ
GATA (THUNK)
BUT IT DID NOT REACH ME.

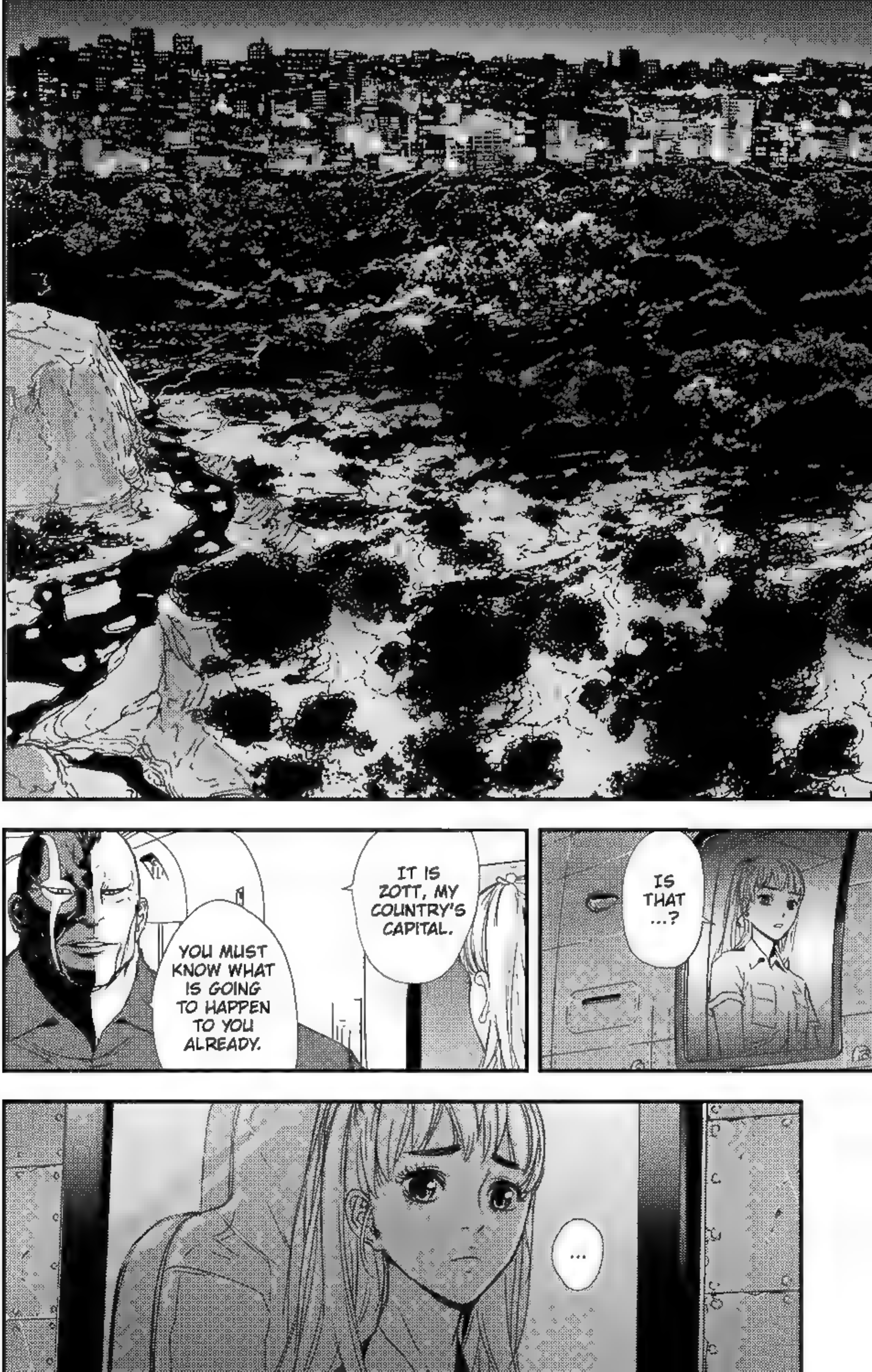



AH!
KA (SNAP)
...I SEE.
YOU GOT CLOSE ENOUGH THAT IF YOU HAD A KNIFE, THE POINT WOULD HAVE STRUCK.
RATHER CHILLING. I TAKE YOUR POINT.
GIVEN THAT I CANNOT SENSE YOUR INTENT TO STRIKE, YOU MIGHT BE EVEN MORE TROUBLESOME THAN THE SAMURAI.
PA (POP)
THE ONLY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOU AND MAMORU-SAN IS YOUR BASIC PHYSICAL QUALITY.
IF THAT GAP WERE CLOSED, WE WOULD HAVE A CHANCE AT WINNING.

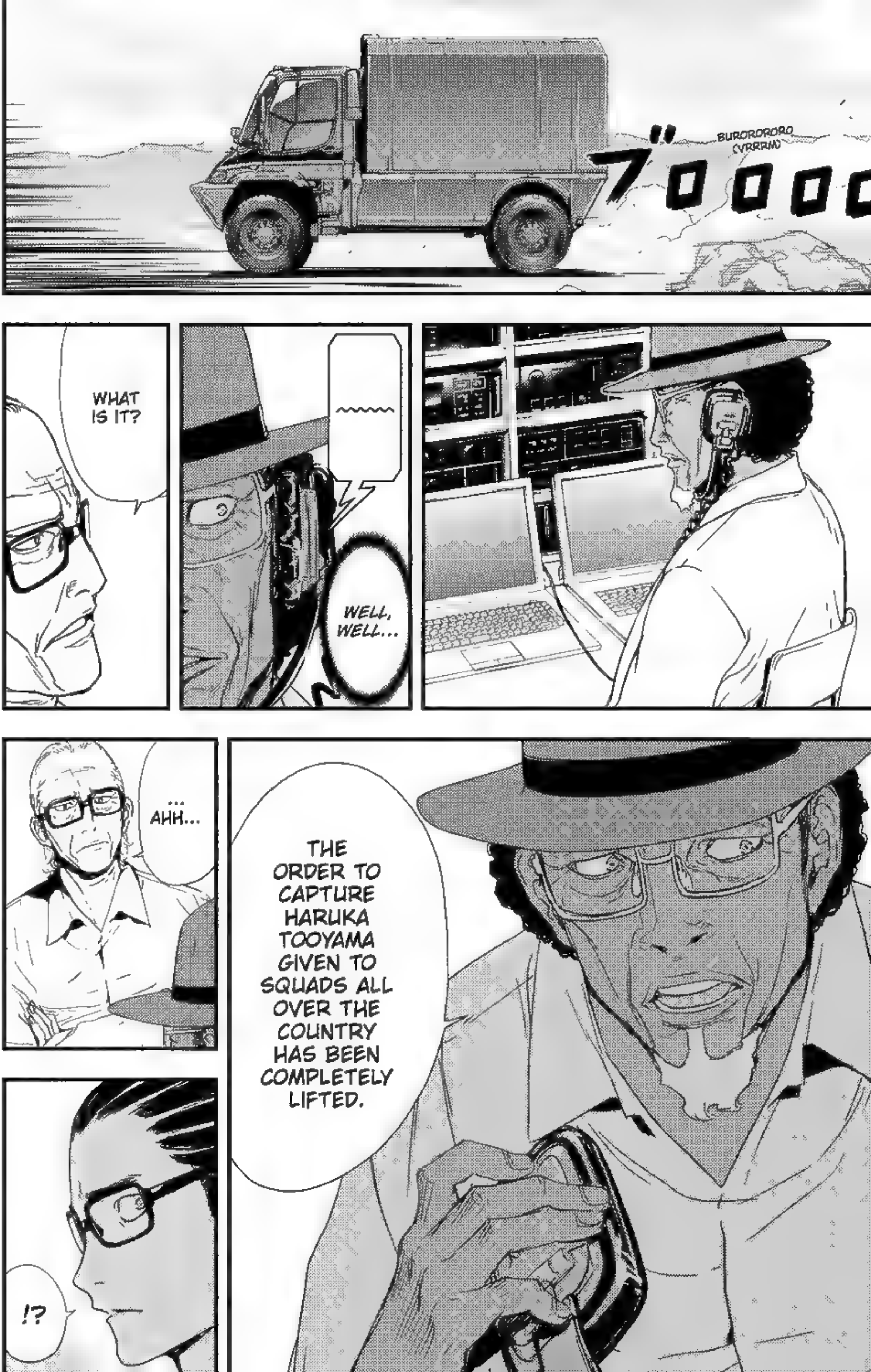

YOU THINK AN ORDINARY MAN CAN COVER THAT GAP...?
I LOOK FORWARD TO THE ATTEMPT.
MAMORU-SAN IS GOING TO PROVE THAT HIMSELF.
...AT LAST I UNDERSTAND...
YOUR ASSAULT ON DANTE 313 WAS TO PROTECT THE SAMURAI, WASN'T IT?
YOU WANTED TO PREVENT HIM FROM FACING ME WITHOUT A PLAN.

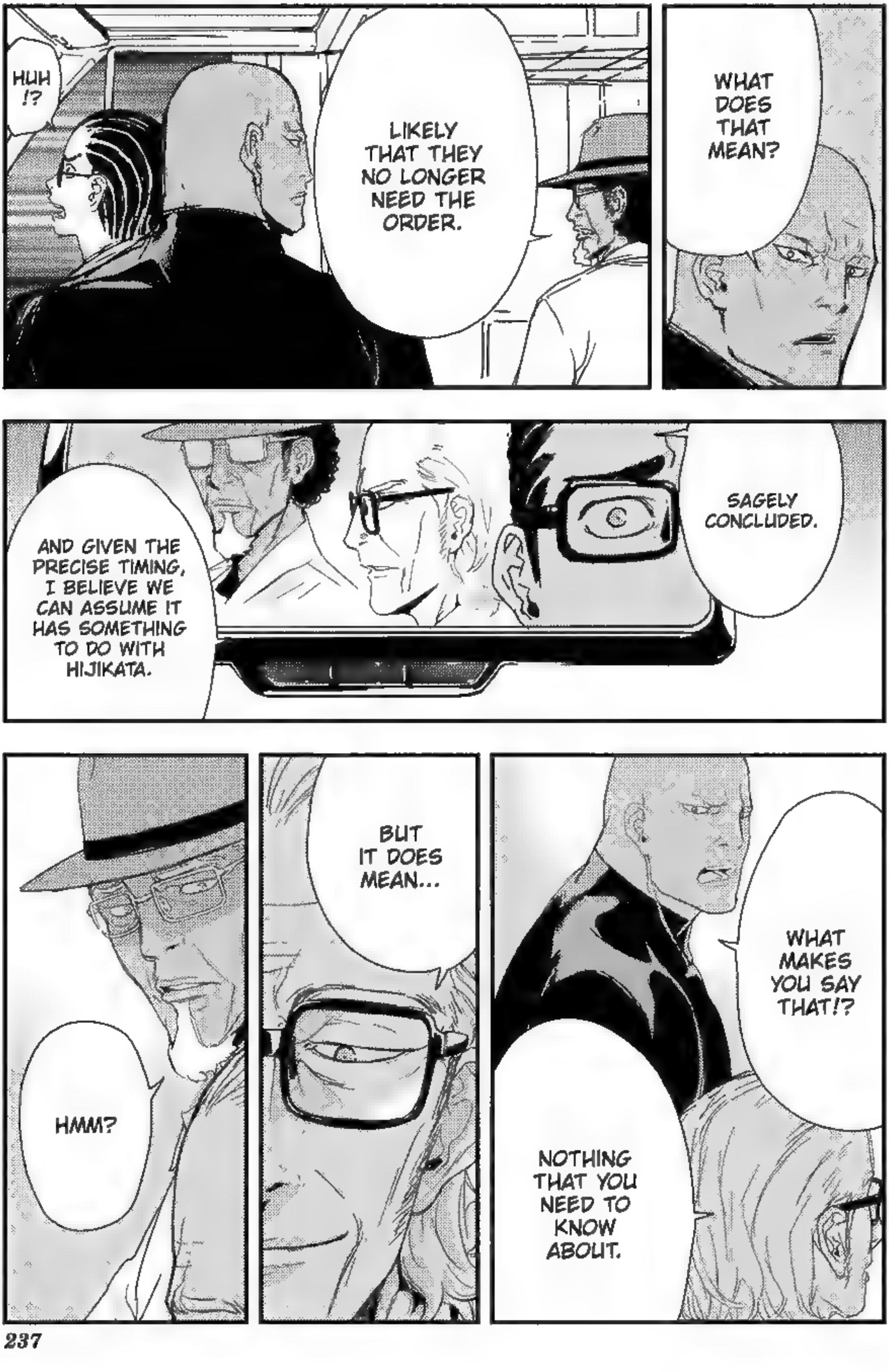

AFTER THAT, YOUR INTERFERENCE WAS THWARTED BY THE EVOLUTION OF WISEMAN'S PLANS...
...AND AS A RESULT, YOU HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO SHOW YOURSELF BEFORE ME. DO I HAVE THAT RIGHT?
...
VERY, VERY IMPRESSIVE...
THIS IS COMPLETELY UNTHINKABLE FROM A HELPLESS GIRL I WOULD HAVE CAUGHT WITHOUT A STRUGGLE JUST HALF A YEAR AGO...
SADLY, YOUR TOUCHING SENTIMENT...
...WILL BE RUINED WHEN HE COMES TO FACE ME AGAIN ANYWAY.
THAT'S... NOT TRUE...

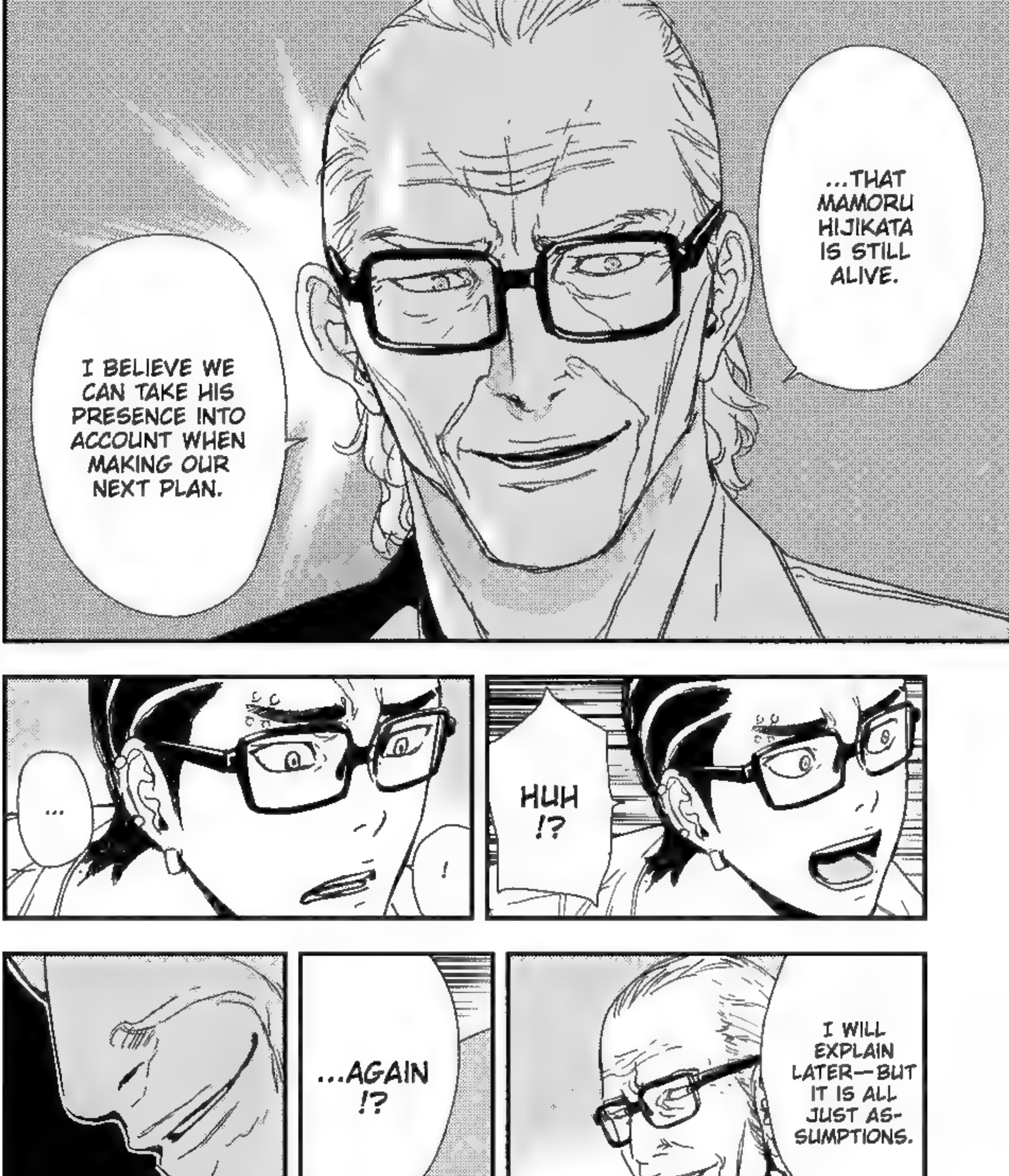

IT IS. BECAUSE HE WILL NEVER BE MY MATCH IN PHYSICAL TERMS.
UNLESS HE IS CAPABLE OF MOVEMENT SURPASSING HUMAN CAPABILITIES AND HAS YOUR SUPERSENSORY "FORESIGHT"...
...HE WILL NOT TOUCH ME WITH HIS SWORD. NOT UNLESS HE HAS SOME MAGIC POWERS AT HIS DISPOSAL.
...
バババババ
BA
BA
BA
BA
BA (BUDDA)

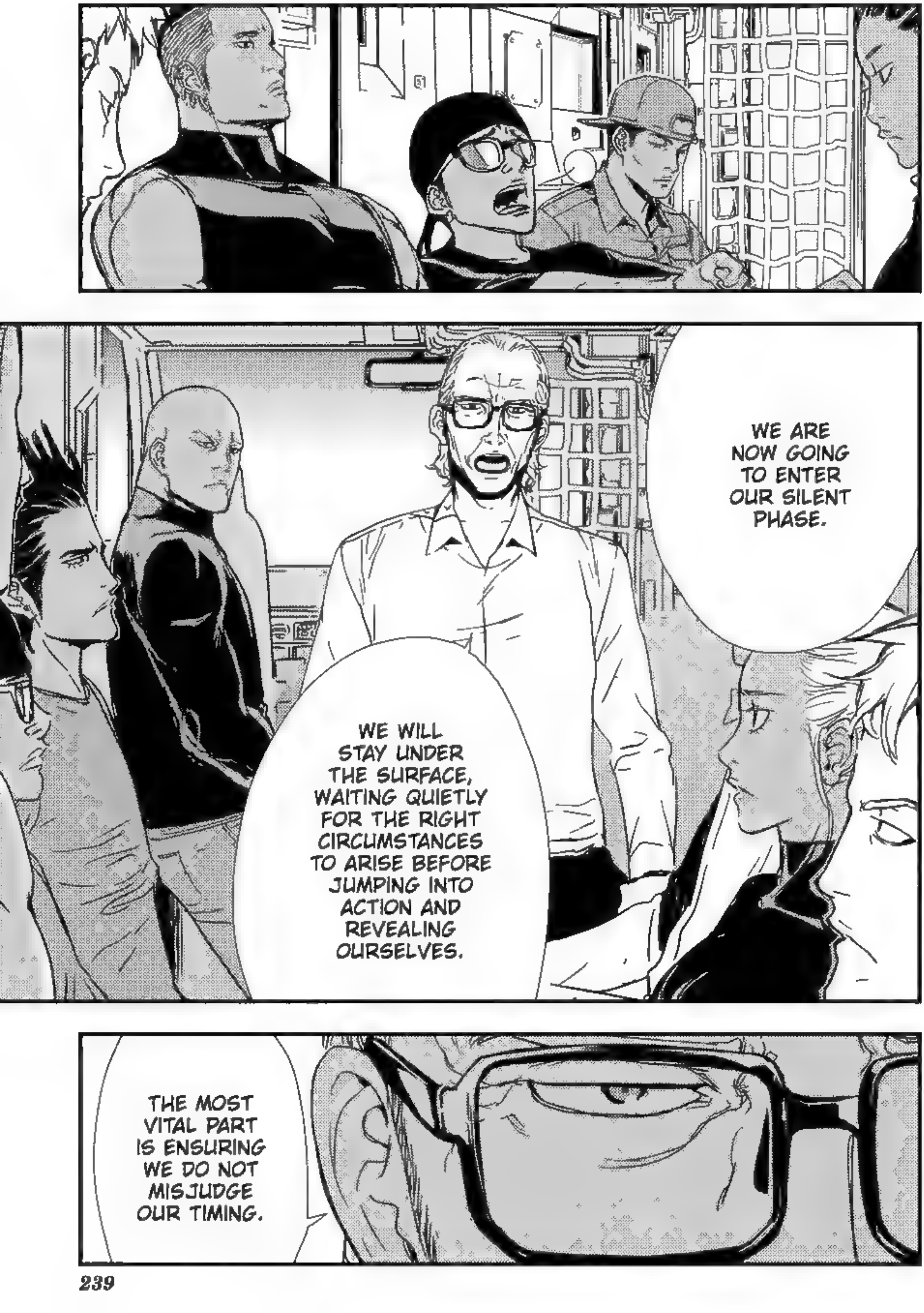

IS THAT ...?
IT IS ZOTT, MY COUNTRY'S CAPITAL.
YOU MUST KNOW WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN TO YOU ALREADY.
...

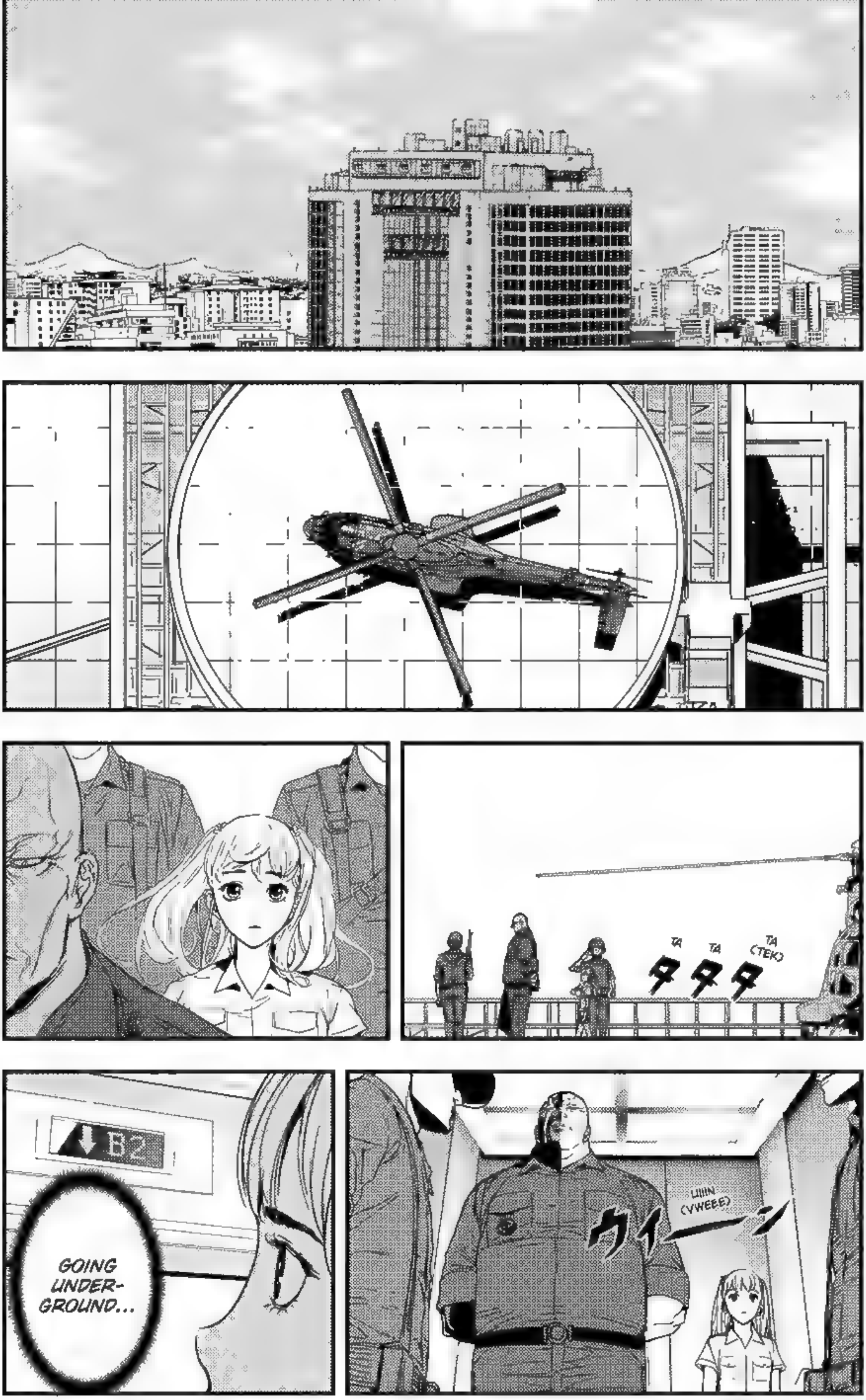
chapter 204

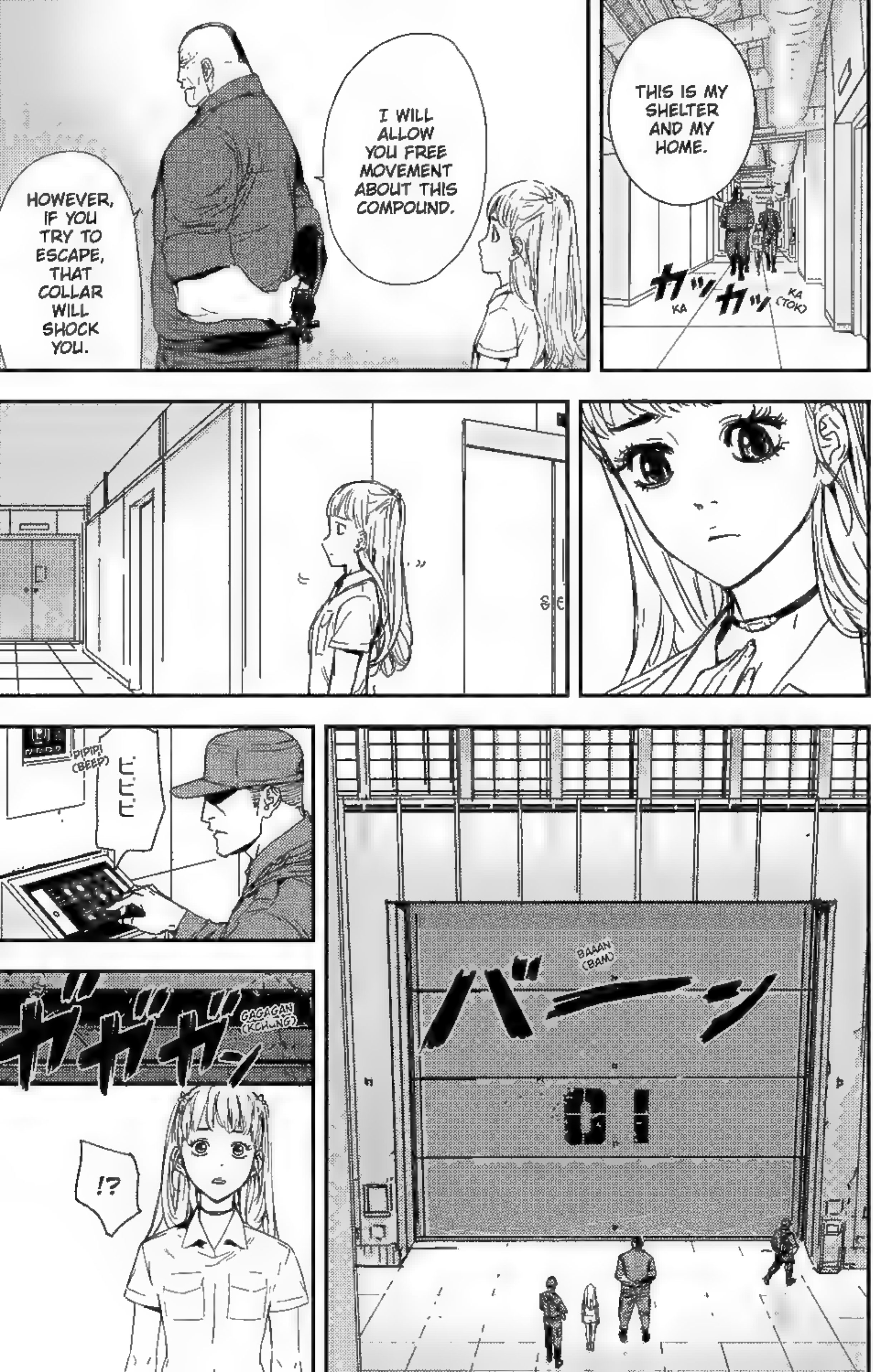

ブロロロ
BURORORORO (VRRRM)
〰〰
WELL, WELL...
WHAT IS IT?
THE ORDER TO CAPTURE HARUKA TOOYAMA GIVEN TO SQUADS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY HAS BEEN COMPLETELY LIFTED.
... AHH...
!?

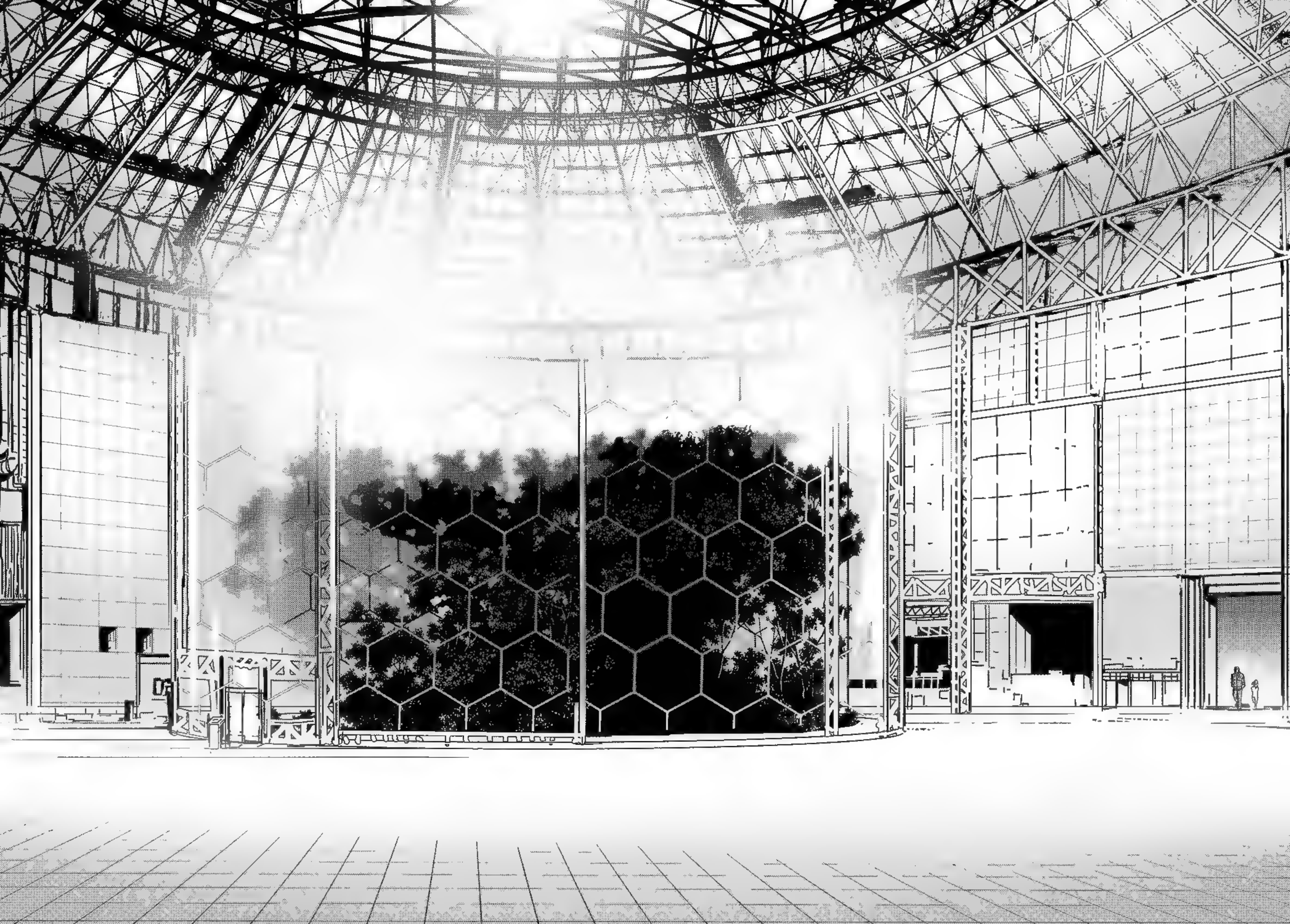

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
LIKELY THAT THEY NO LONGER NEED THE ORDER.
HUH!?
SAGELY CONCLUDED.
AND GIVEN THE PRECISE TIMING, I BELIEVE WE CAN ASSUME IT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH HIJIKATA.
WHAT MAKES YOU SAY THAT!?
NOTHING THAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT.
BUT IT DOES MEAN...
HMM?

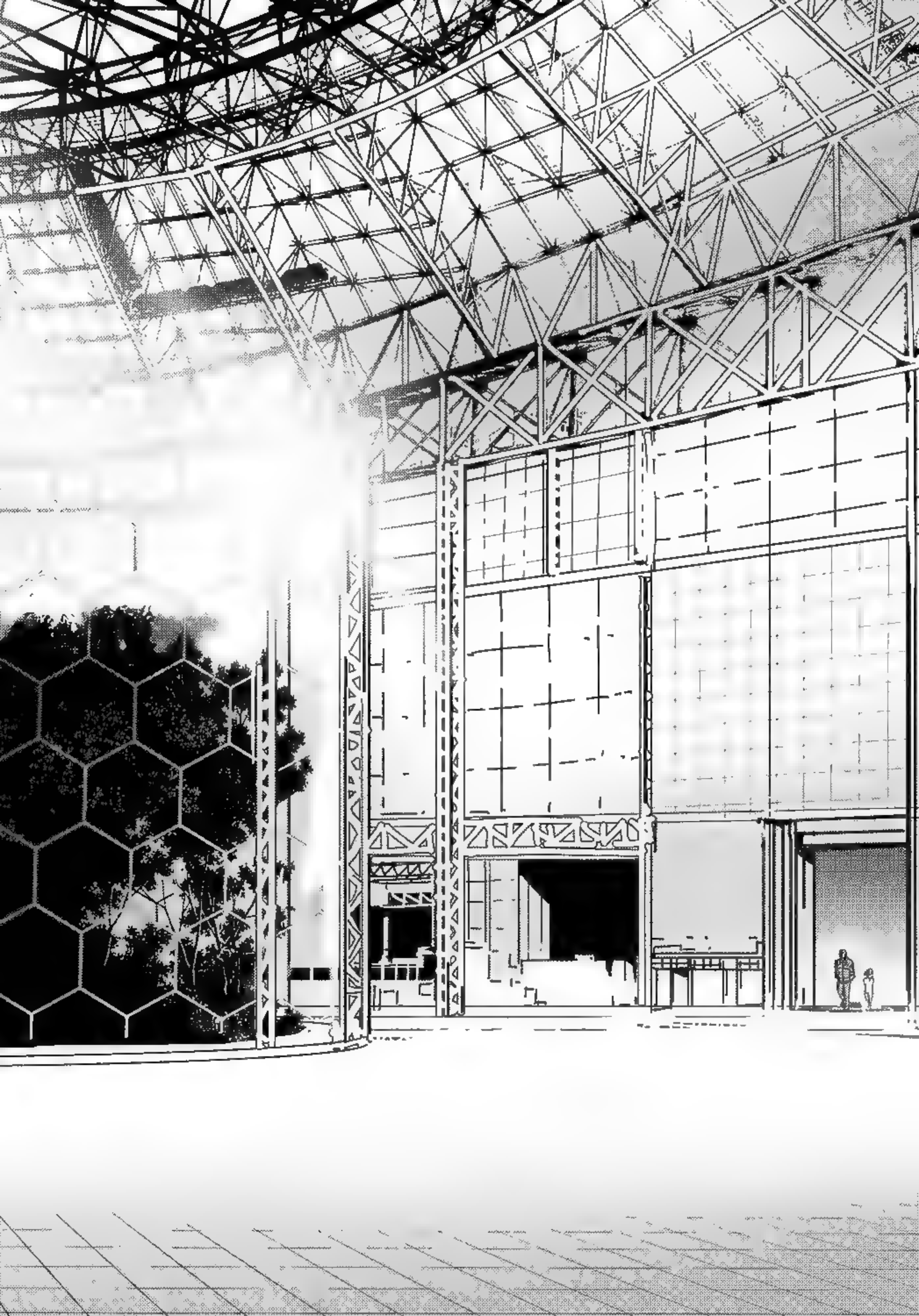

...THAT MAMORU HIJIKATA IS STILL ALIVE.
I BELIEVE WE CAN TAKE HIS PRESENCE INTO ACCOUNT WHEN MAKING OUR NEXT PLAN.
HUH!?
!
...
I WILL EXPLAIN LATER—BUT IT IS ALL JUST ASSUMPTIONS.
PLUS, THERE IS NOW A NEED TO ALTER OUR STRATEGY.
...AGAIN!?
HEH HEH HEH!

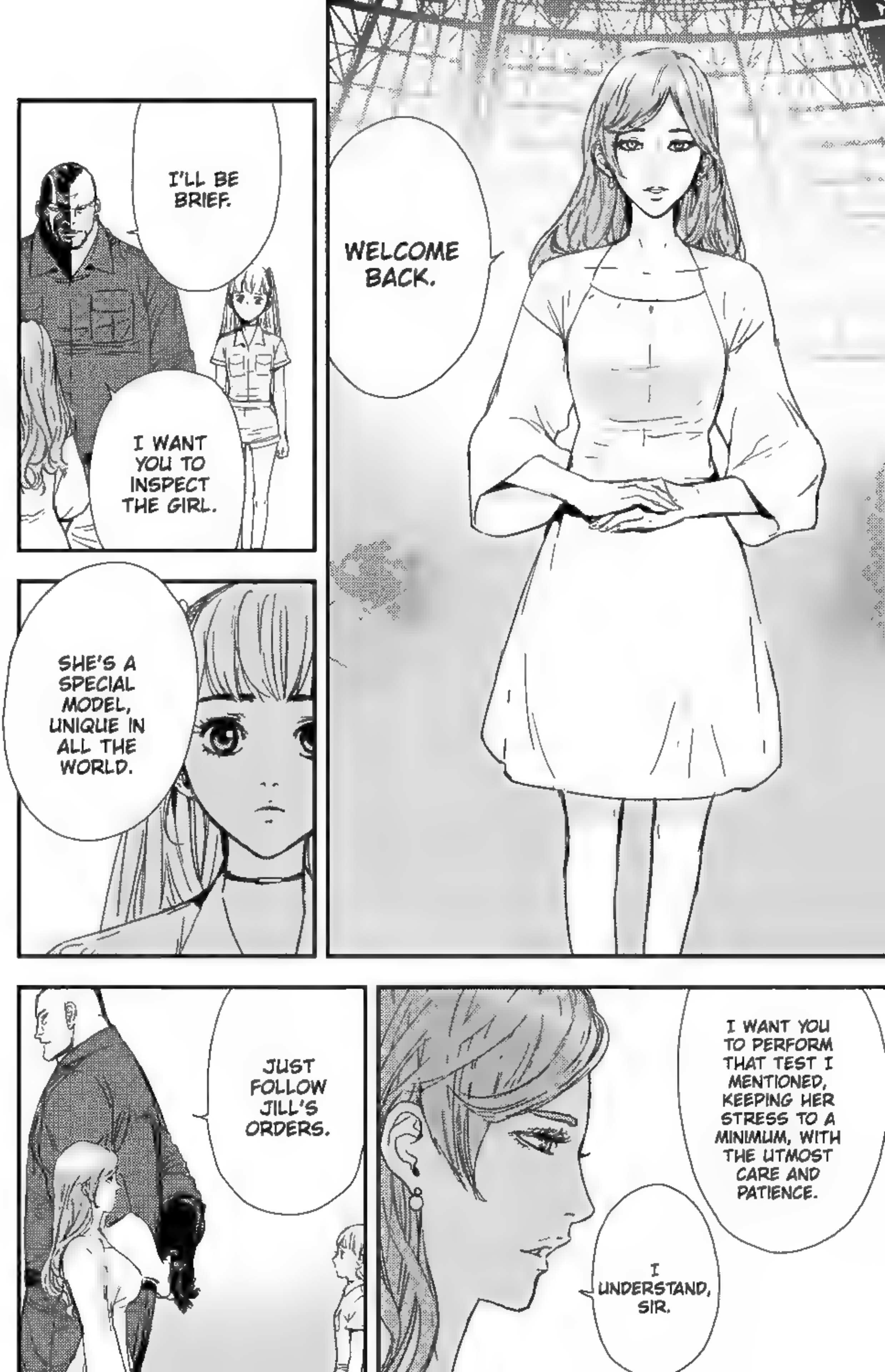

WE ARE NOW GOING TO ENTER OUR SILENT PHASE.
WE WILL STAY UNDER THE SURFACE, WAITING QUIETLY FOR THE RIGHT CIRCUMSTANCES TO ARISE BEFORE JUMPING INTO ACTION AND REVEALING OURSELVES.
THE MOST VITAL PART IS ENSURING WE DO NOT MISJUDGE OUR TIMING.

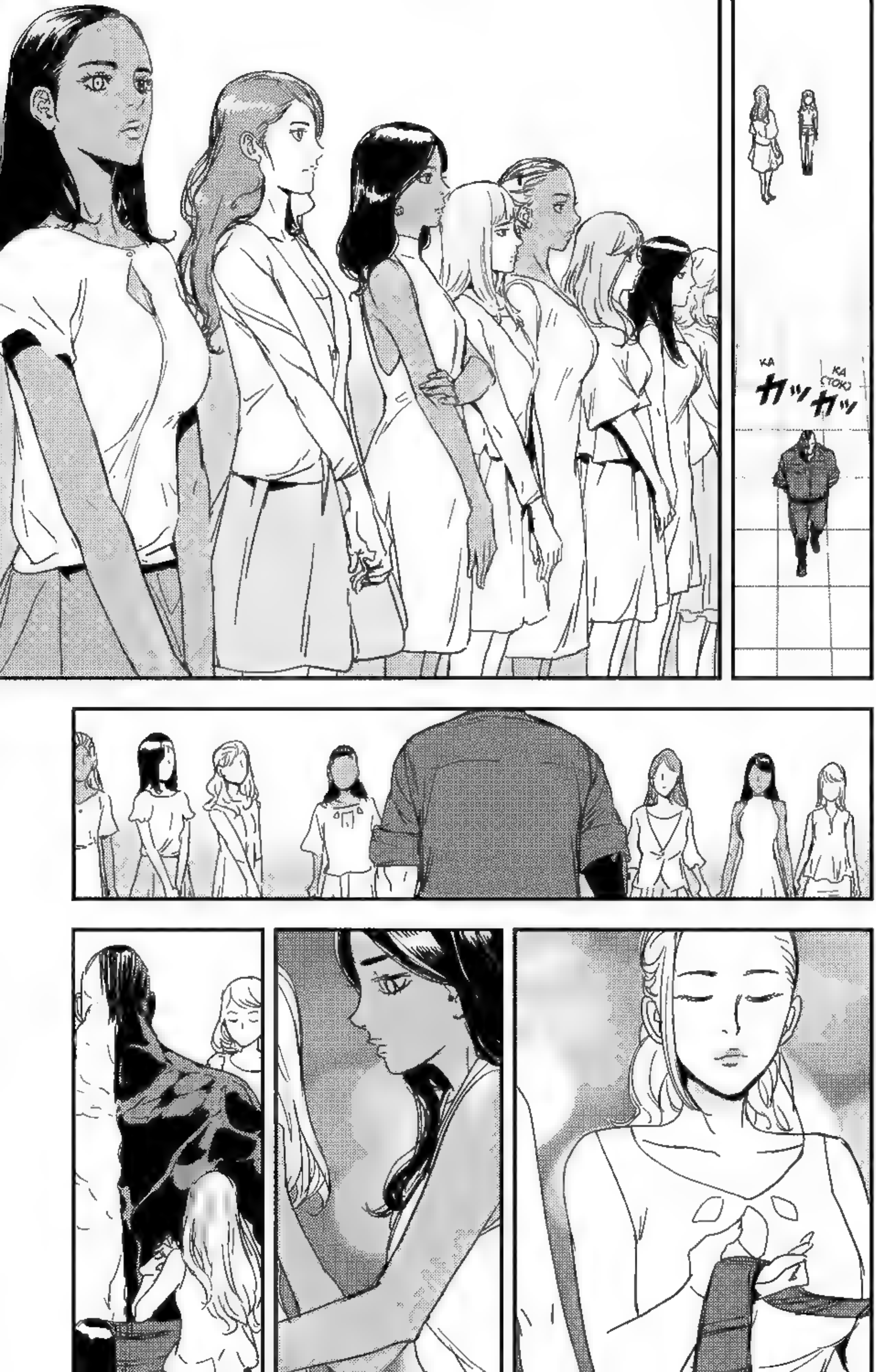

タタタ
TA TA TA (TEK)
ウィーン
UIIIN (VWEEE)
B2
GOING UNDERGROUND...

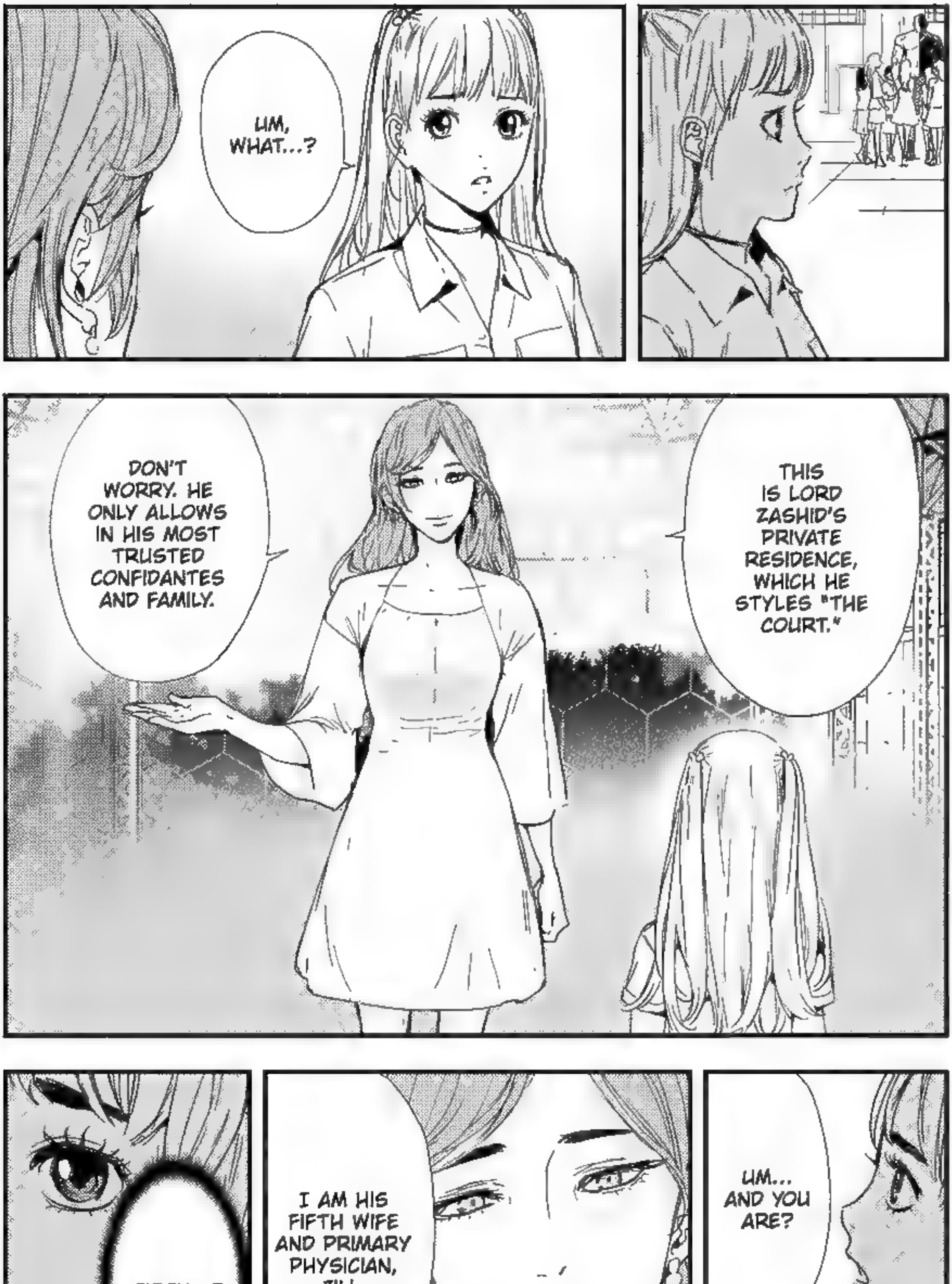

THIS IS MY SHELTER AND MY HOME.
カッ KA
カッ KA (TOK)
I WILL ALLOW YOU FREE MOVEMENT ABOUT THIS COMPOUND.
HOWEVER, IF YOU TRY TO ESCAPE, THAT COLLAR WILL SHOCK YOU.
ピピピ PIPIPI (BEEP)
ガガガ GAGAGAN (KCHUNG)
!?
バーン BAAAN (BAM)
01

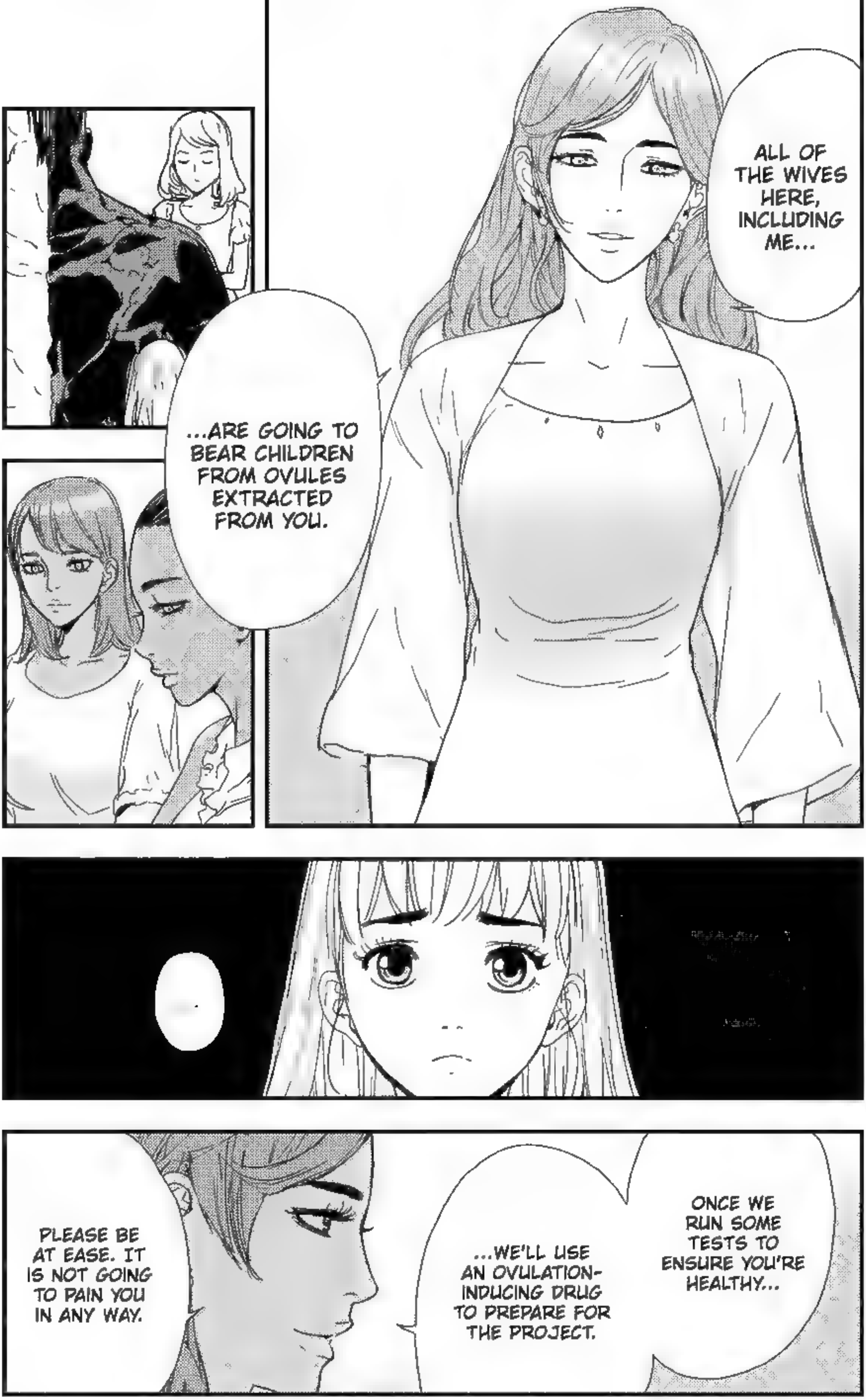


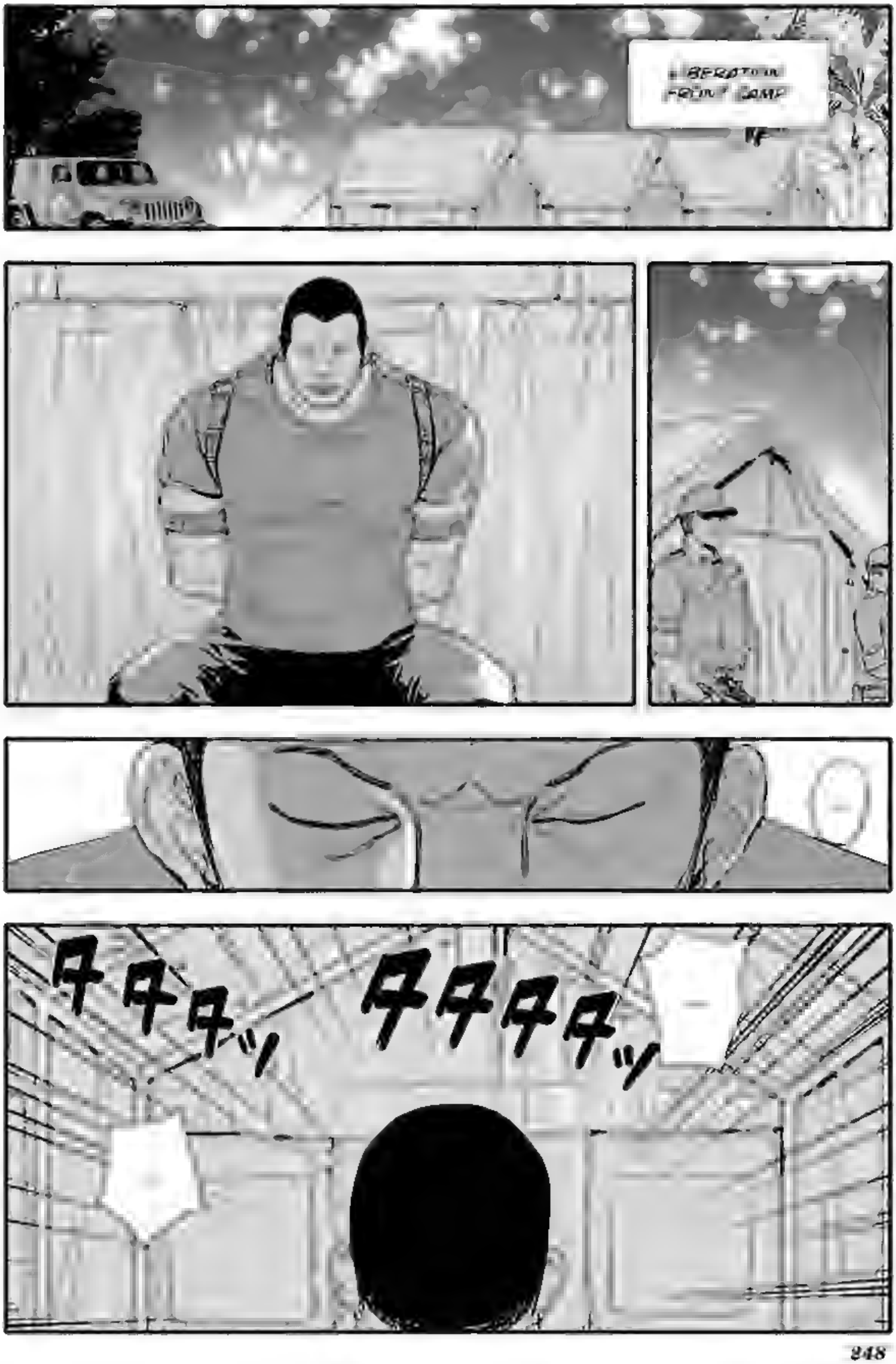


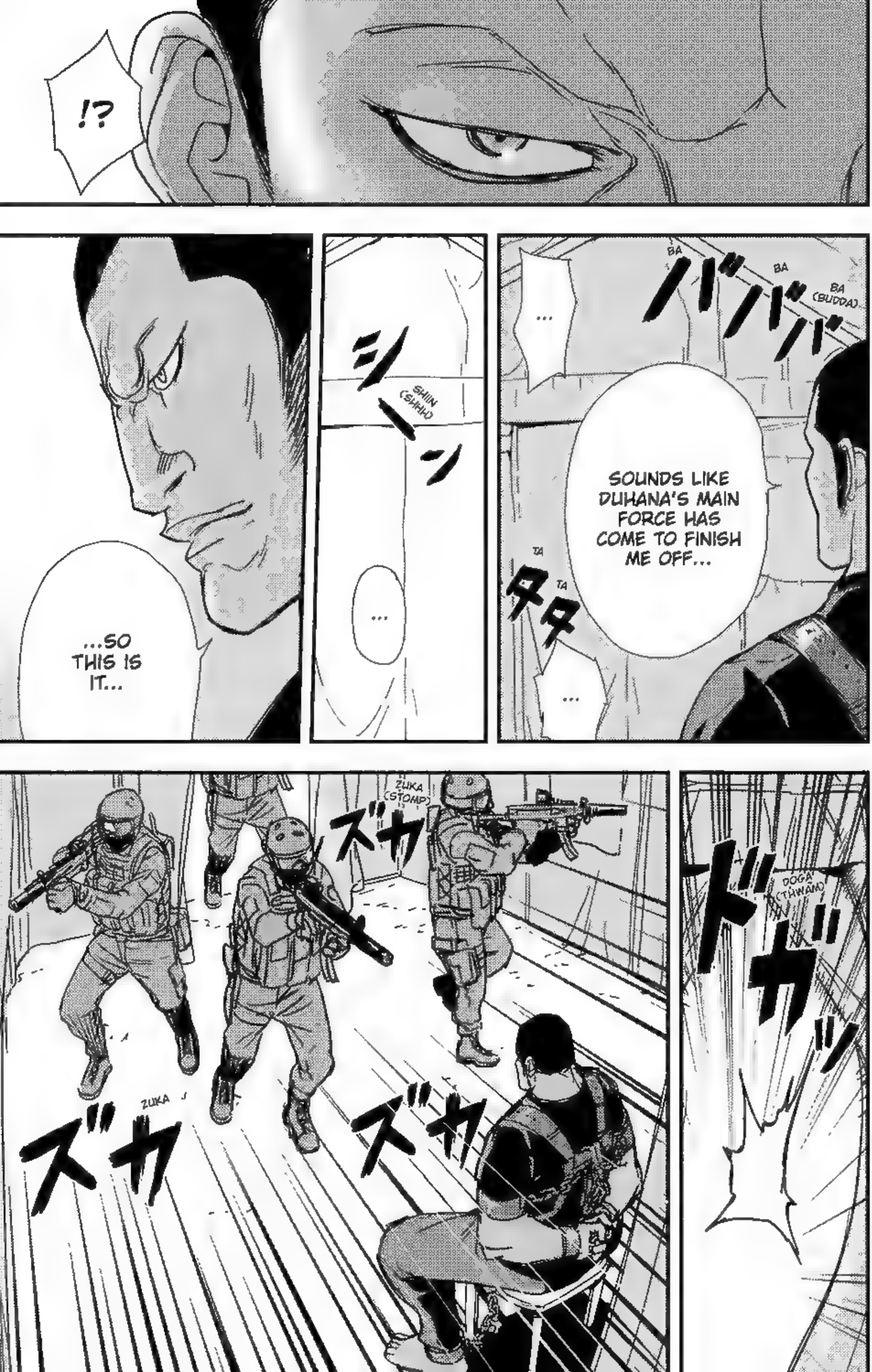

WELCOME BACK.
I'LL BE BRIEF.
I WANT YOU TO INSPECT THE GIRL.
SHE'S A SPECIAL MODEL, UNIQUE IN ALL THE WORLD.
I WANT YOU TO PERFORM THAT TEST I MENTIONED, KEEPING HER STRESS TO A MINIMUM, WITH THE UTMOST CARE AND PATIENCE.
I UNDERSTAND, SIR.
JUST FOLLOW JILL'S ORDERS.

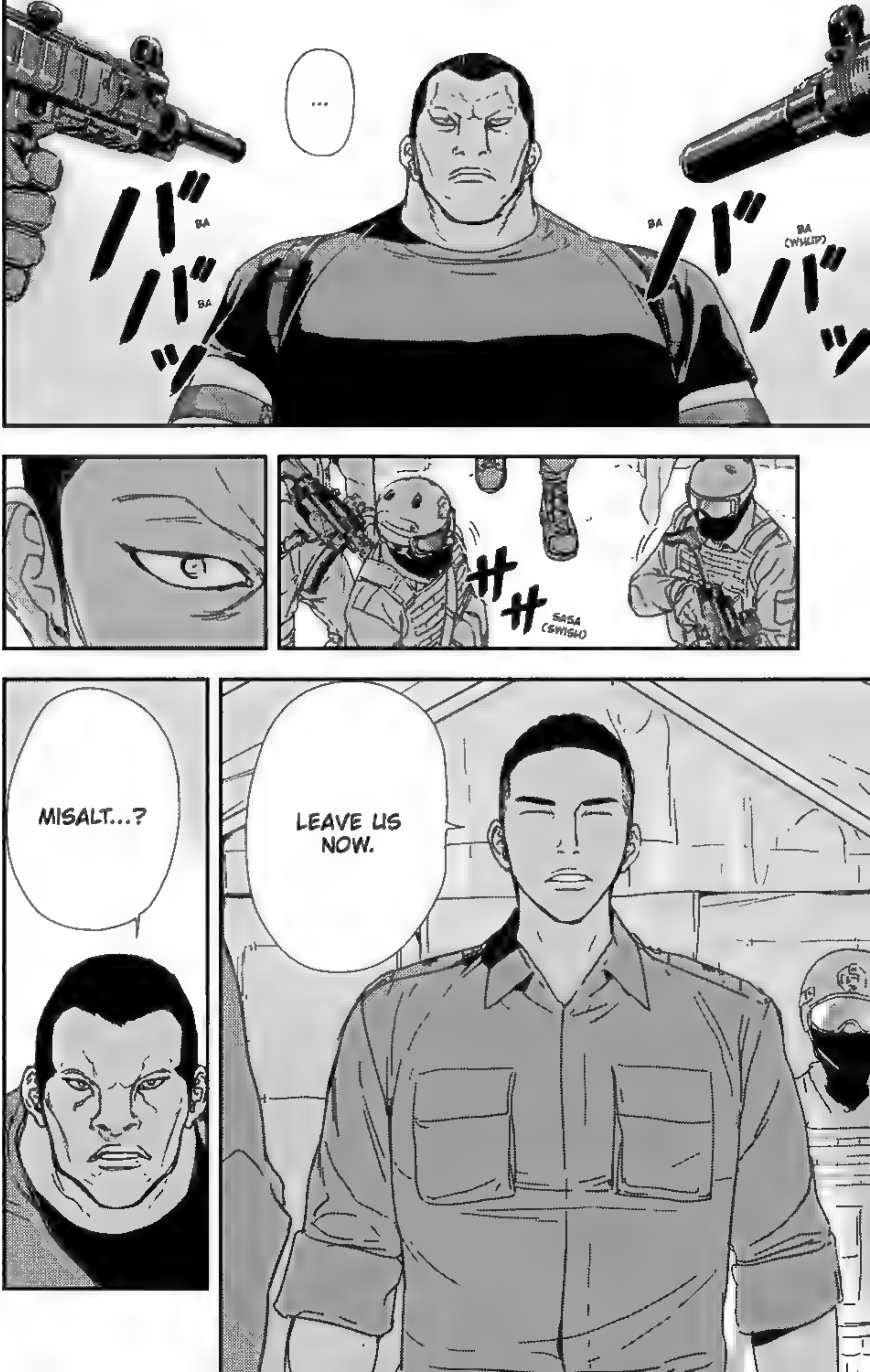

KA (TOK)
カッ
KA
カッ

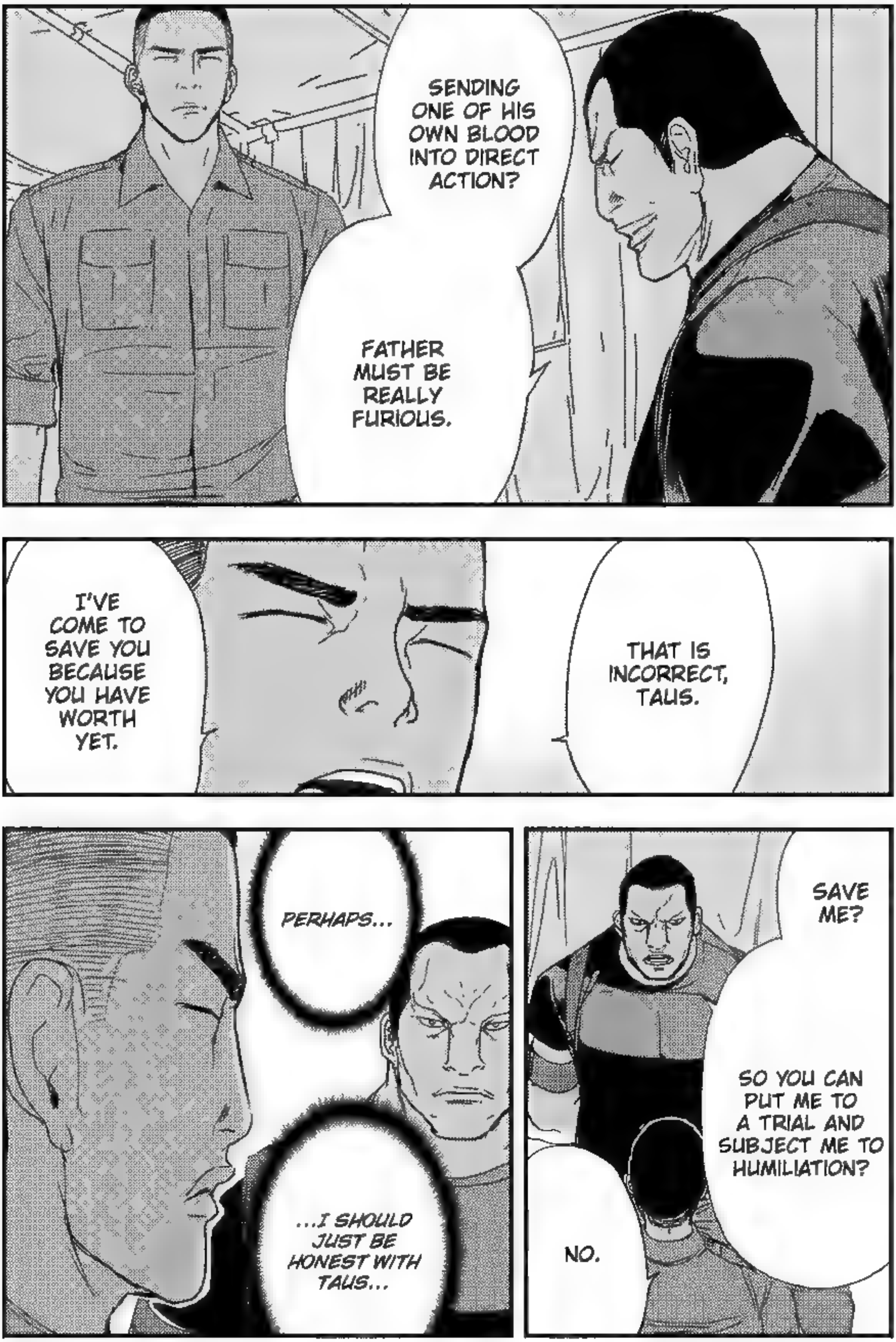

UM, WHAT...?
THIS IS LORD ZASHID'S PRIVATE RESIDENCE, WHICH HE STYLES "THE COURT."
DON'T WORRY. HE ONLY ALLOWS IN HIS MOST TRUSTED CONFIDANTES AND FAMILY.
UM... AND YOU ARE?
I AM HIS FIFTH WIFE AND PRIMARY PHYSICIAN, JILL.
FIFTH...?

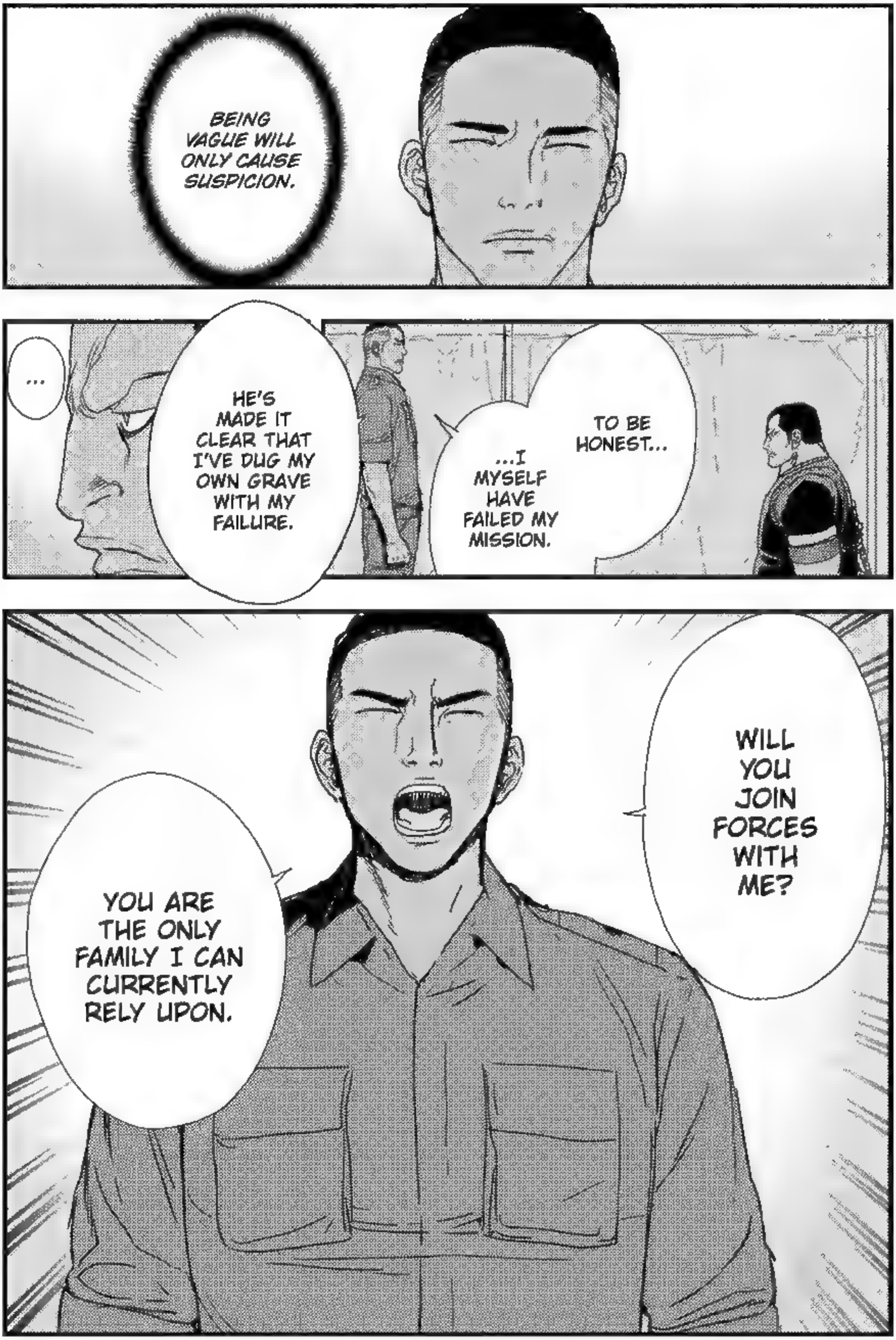

ALL OF THE WIVES HERE, INCLUDING ME...
...ARE GOING TO BEAR CHILDREN FROM OVULES EXTRACTED FROM YOU.
ONCE WE RUN SOME TESTS TO ENSURE YOU'RE HEALTHY...
...WE'LL USE AN OVULATION-INDUCING DRUG TO PREPARE FOR THE PROJECT.
PLEASE BE AT EASE. IT IS NOT GOING TO PAIN YOU IN ANY WAY.

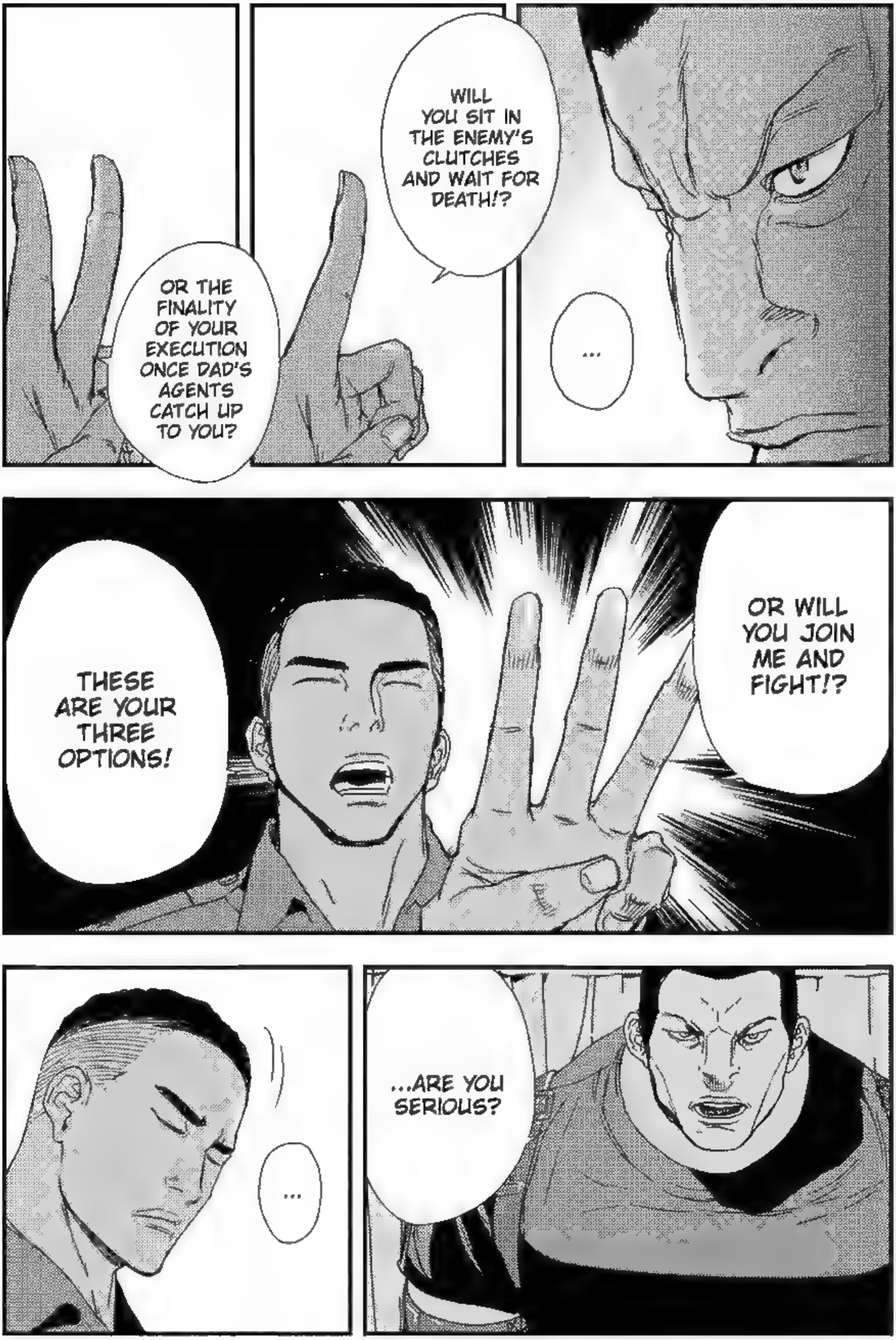

LIBERATION
FRONT CAMP
—
タタタッ
タタタタタッ
—

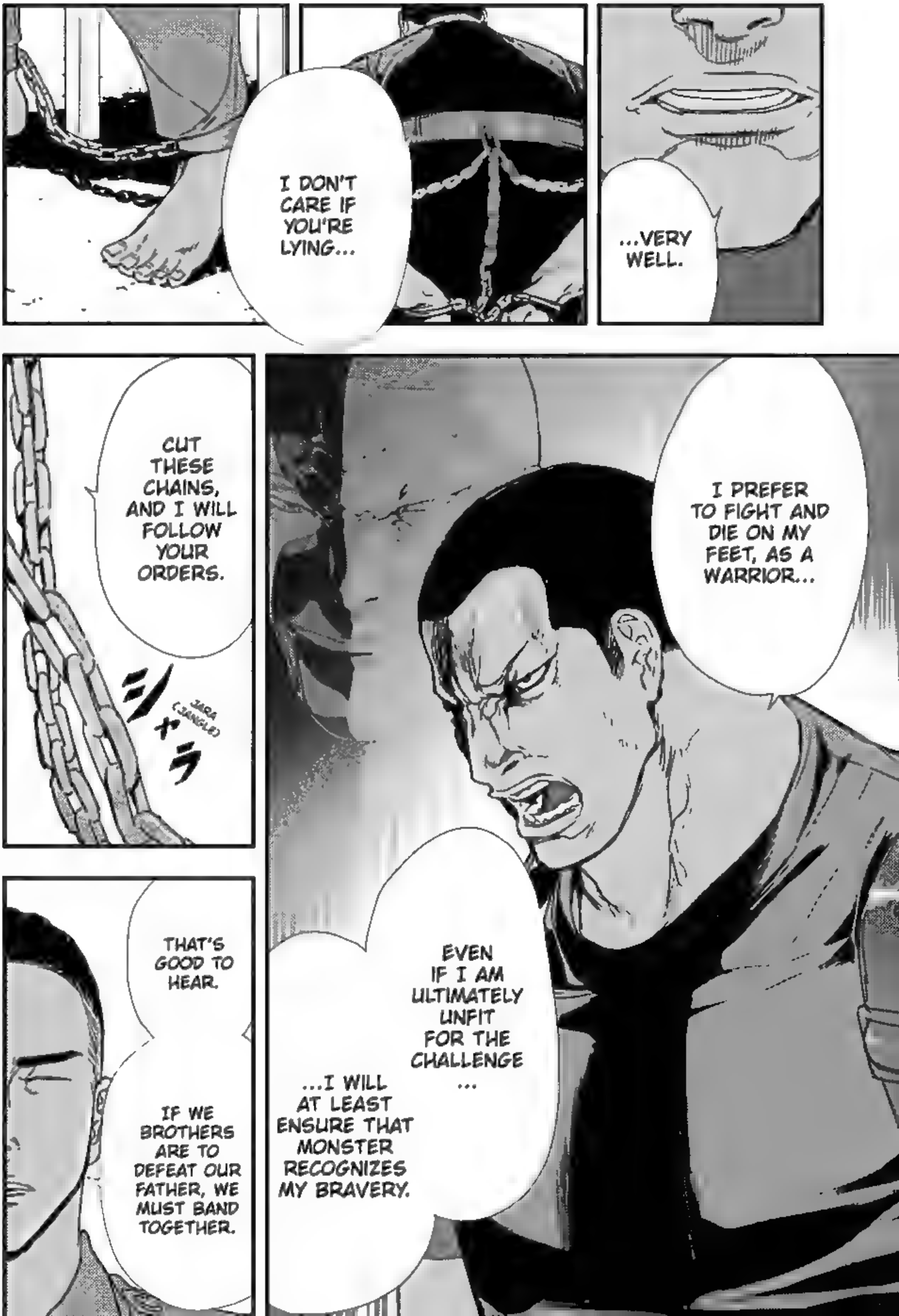

!?
バババ
BA BA BA (BUDDA)
...
SOUNDS LIKE DUHANA'S MAIN FORCE HAS COME TO FINISH ME OFF...
タタ
TA TA
...
シーン
SHIIN (SHHH)
...
...SO THIS IS IT...
ドガッ
DOGA (THWAM)
ズカ
ZUKA (STOMP)
ズカ
ZUKA
ズカ

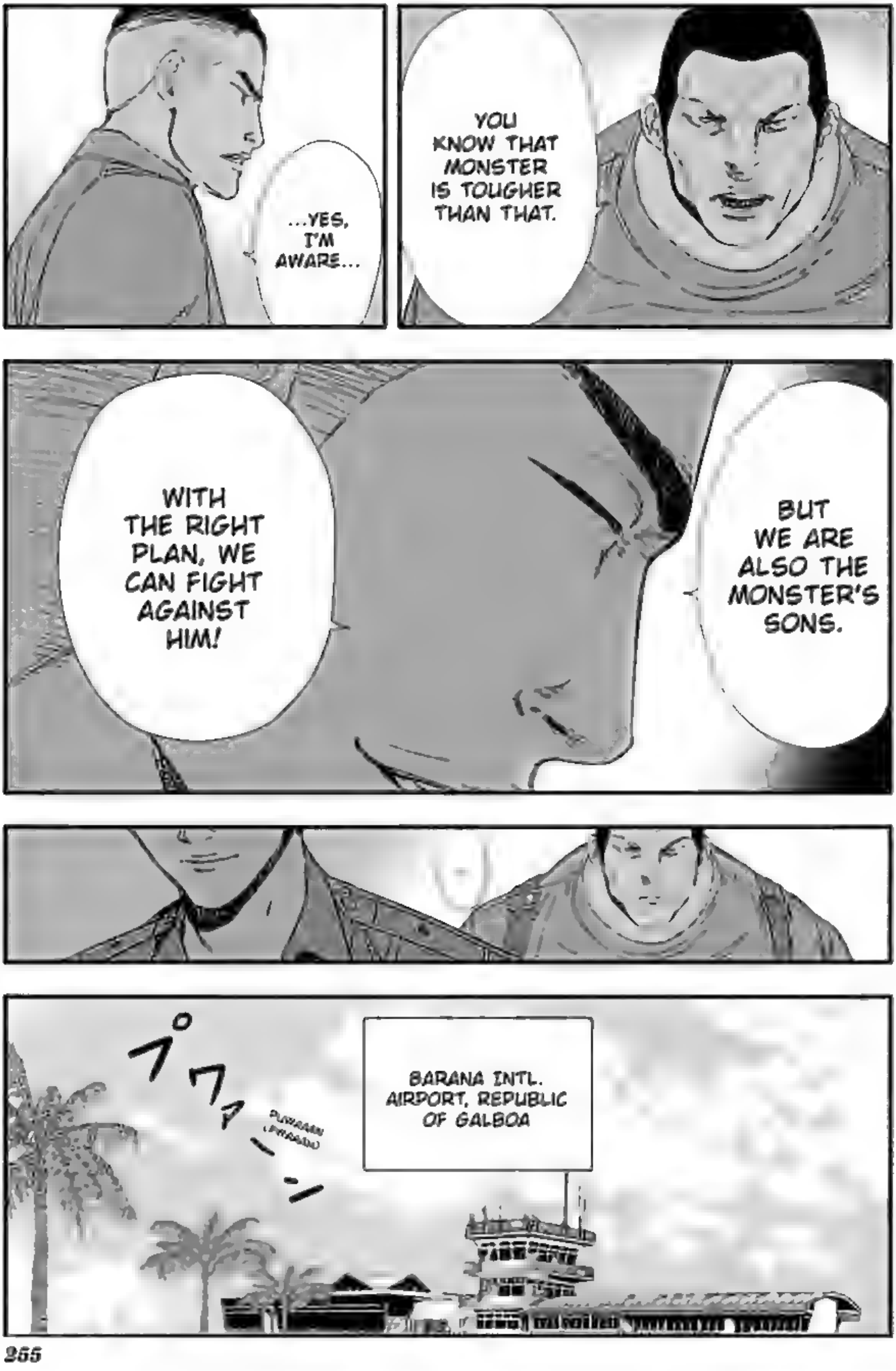

...
バ BA
バッ BA (WHUP)
バ BA
バ BA
ササ SASA (SWISH)
LEAVE US NOW.
MISALT...?

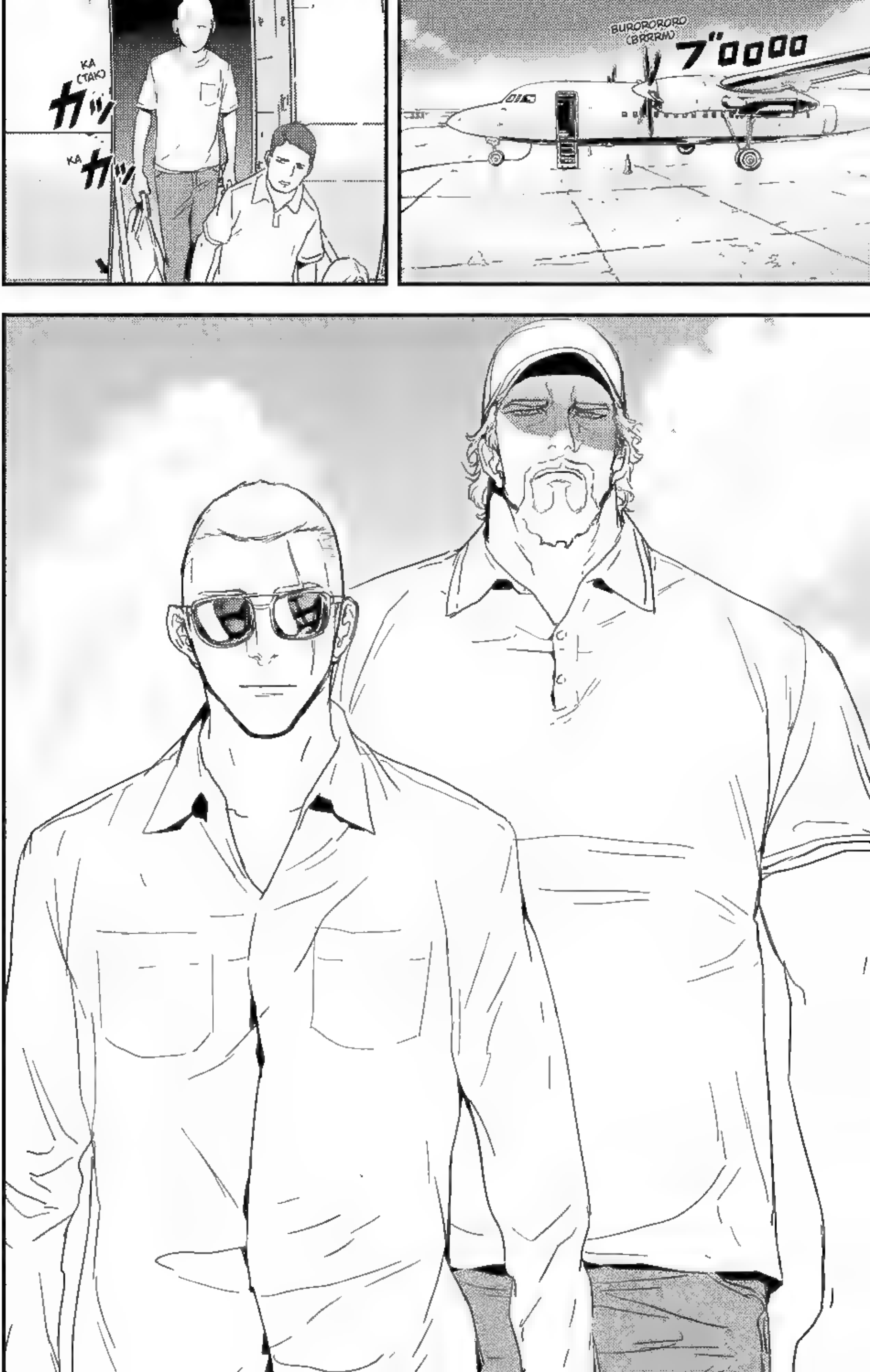

SENDING ONE OF HIS OWN BLOOD INTO DIRECT ACTION?
FATHER MUST BE REALLY FURIOUS.
THAT IS INCORRECT, TAUS.
I'VE COME TO SAVE YOU BECAUSE YOU HAVE WORTH YET.
SAVE ME?
SO YOU CAN PUT ME TO A TRIAL AND SUBJECT ME TO HUMILIATION?
NO.
PERHAPS...
...I SHOULD JUST BE HONEST WITH TAUS...


BEING VAGUE WILL ONLY CAUSE SUSPICION.
TO BE HONEST...
...I MYSELF HAVE FAILED MY MISSION.
HE'S MADE IT CLEAR THAT I'VE DUG MY OWN GRAVE WITH MY FAILURE.
...
WILL YOU JOIN FORCES WITH ME?
YOU ARE THE ONLY FAMILY I CAN CURRENTLY RELY UPON.

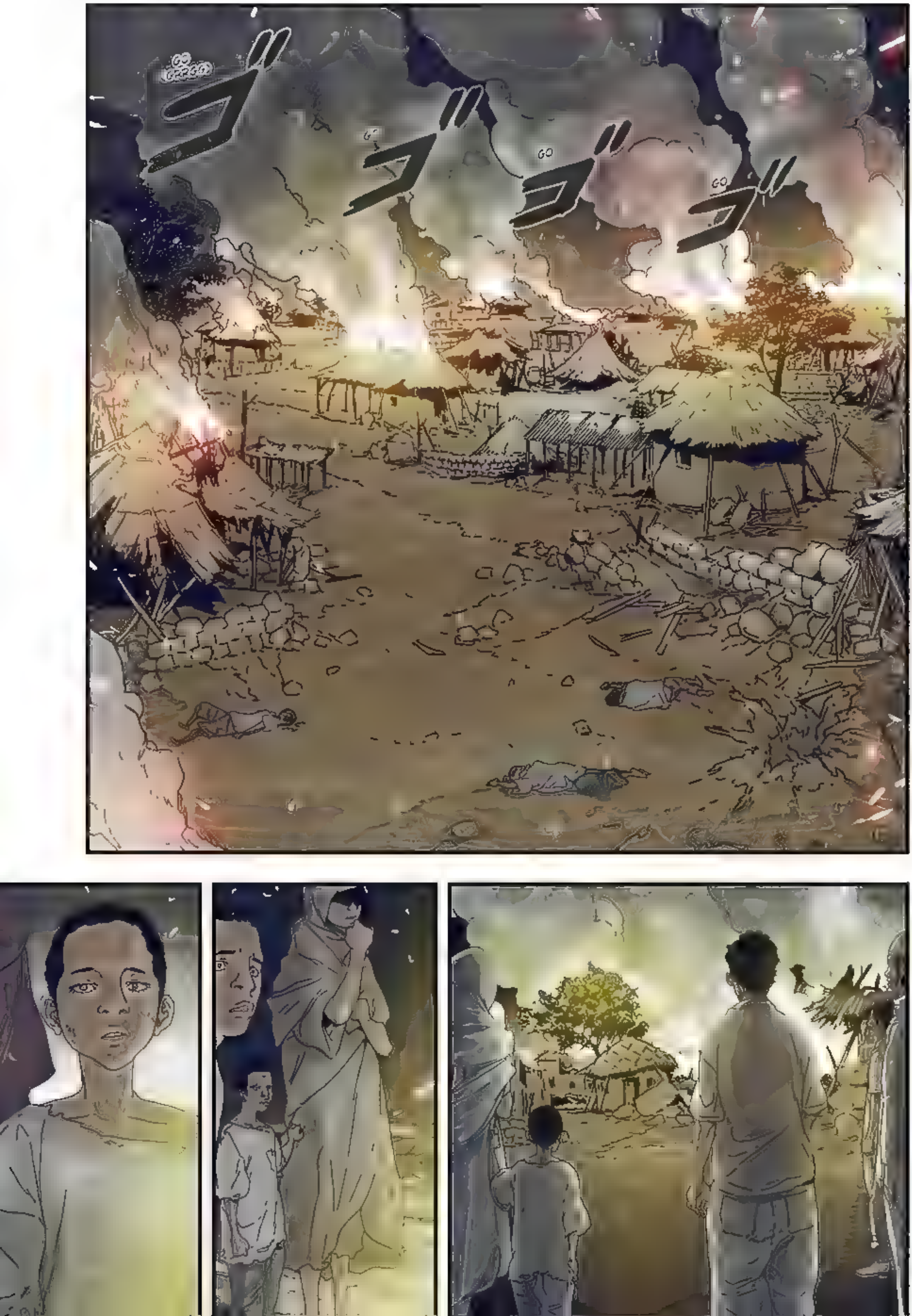

...
WILL YOU SIT IN THE ENEMY'S CLUTCHES AND WAIT FOR DEATH!?
OR THE FINALITY OF YOUR EXECUTION ONCE DAD'S AGENTS CATCH UP TO YOU?
OR WILL YOU JOIN ME AND FIGHT!?
THESE ARE YOUR THREE OPTIONS!
...ARE YOU SERIOUS?
...


...VERY WELL.
I DON'T CARE IF YOU'RE LYING...
I PREFER TO FIGHT AND DIE ON MY FEET, AS A WARRIOR...
CUT THESE CHAINS, AND I WILL FOLLOW YOUR ORDERS.
ジャラ
JARA (JANGLE)
EVEN IF I AM ULTIMATELY UNFIT FOR THE CHALLENGE ...
...I WILL AT LEAST ENSURE THAT MONSTER RECOGNIZES MY BRAVERY.
THAT'S GOOD TO HEAR.
IF WE BROTHERS ARE TO DEFEAT OUR FATHER, WE MUST BAND TOGETHER.

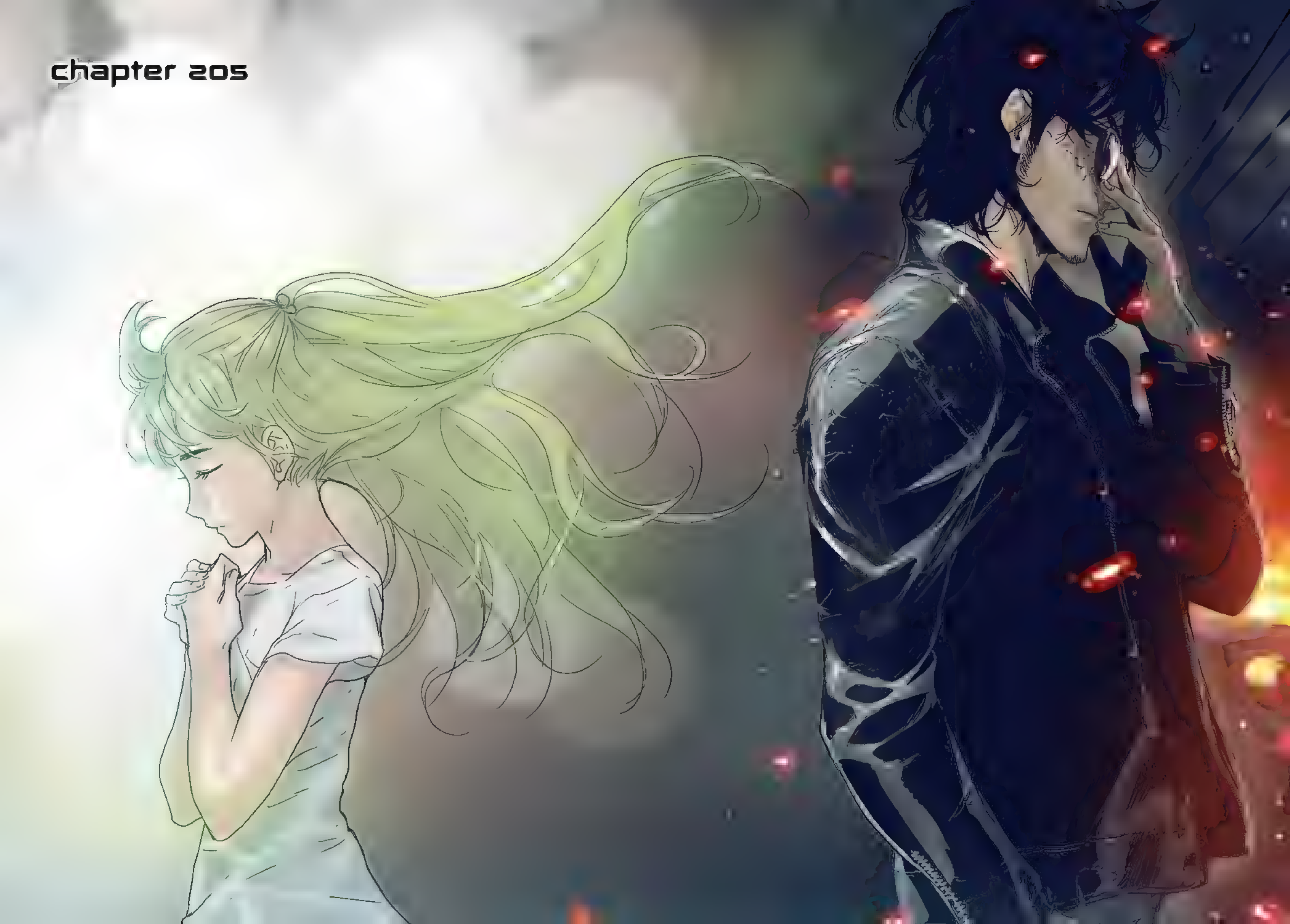

YOU KNOW THAT MONSTER IS TOUGHER THAN THAT.
...YES, I'M AWARE...
BUT WE ARE ALSO THE MONSTER'S SONS.
WITH THE RIGHT PLAN, WE CAN FIGHT AGAINST HIM!
BARANA INTL. AIRPORT, REPUBLIC OF GALBOA
パワァーン
PUWAAAN (PWAAAN)


BUROROROROO
(BRRRM)
ブ"ロロロロ
KA
(TAK)
ガッ
KA
ガッ

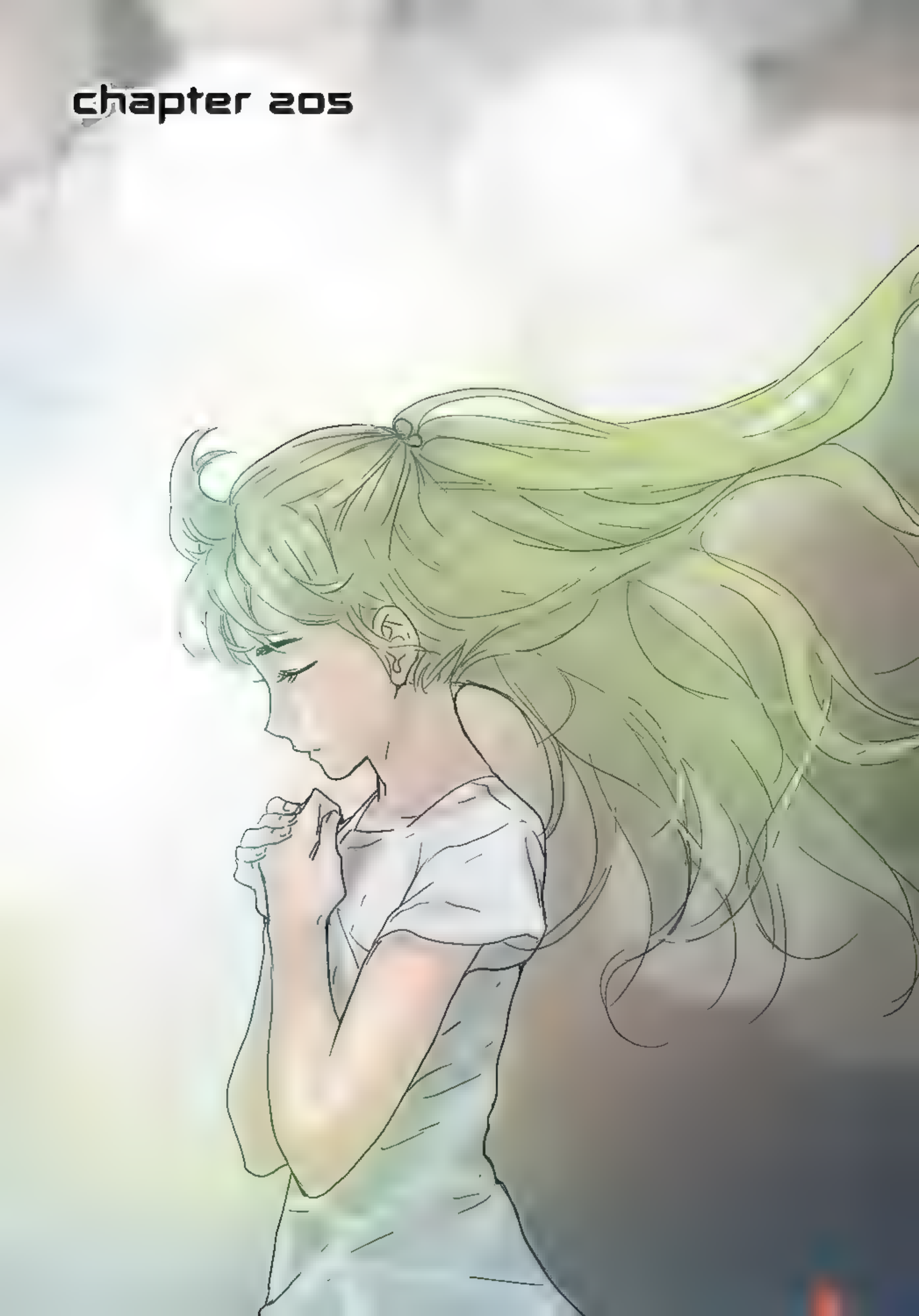
chapter 205

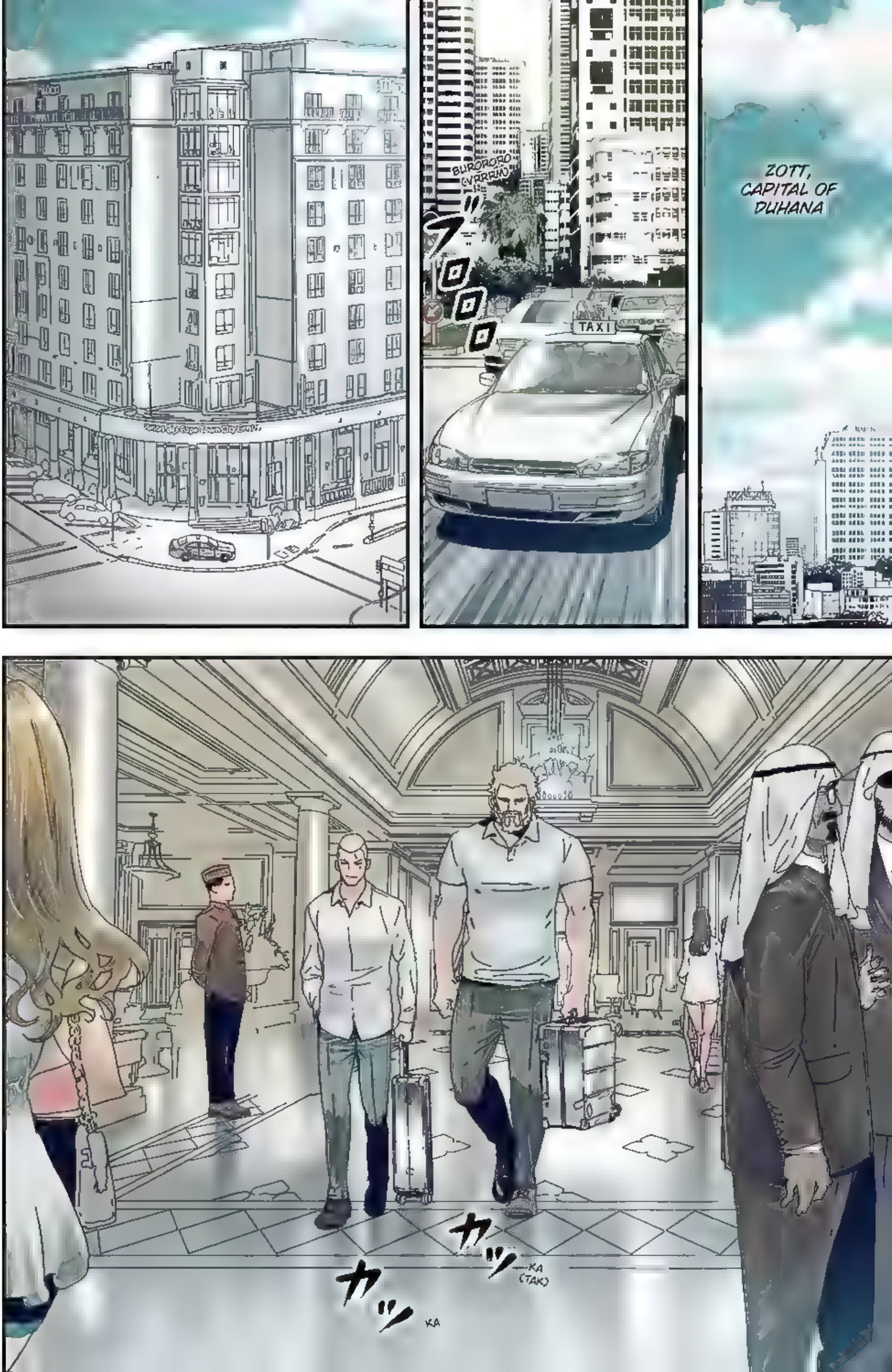

ゴ
GO GRRGO
ゴ
GO
ゴ
GO
ゴ
GO

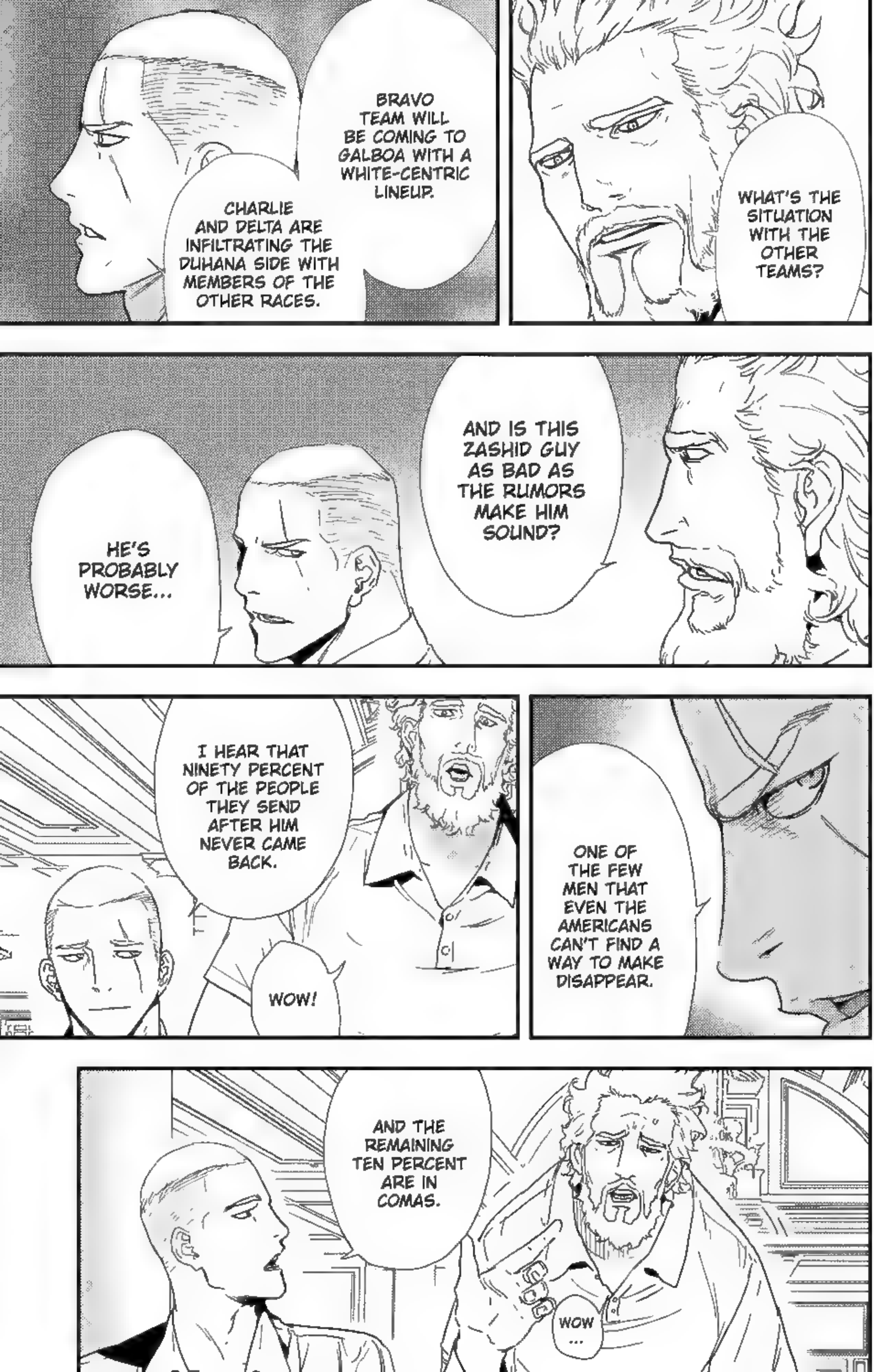
chapter 205

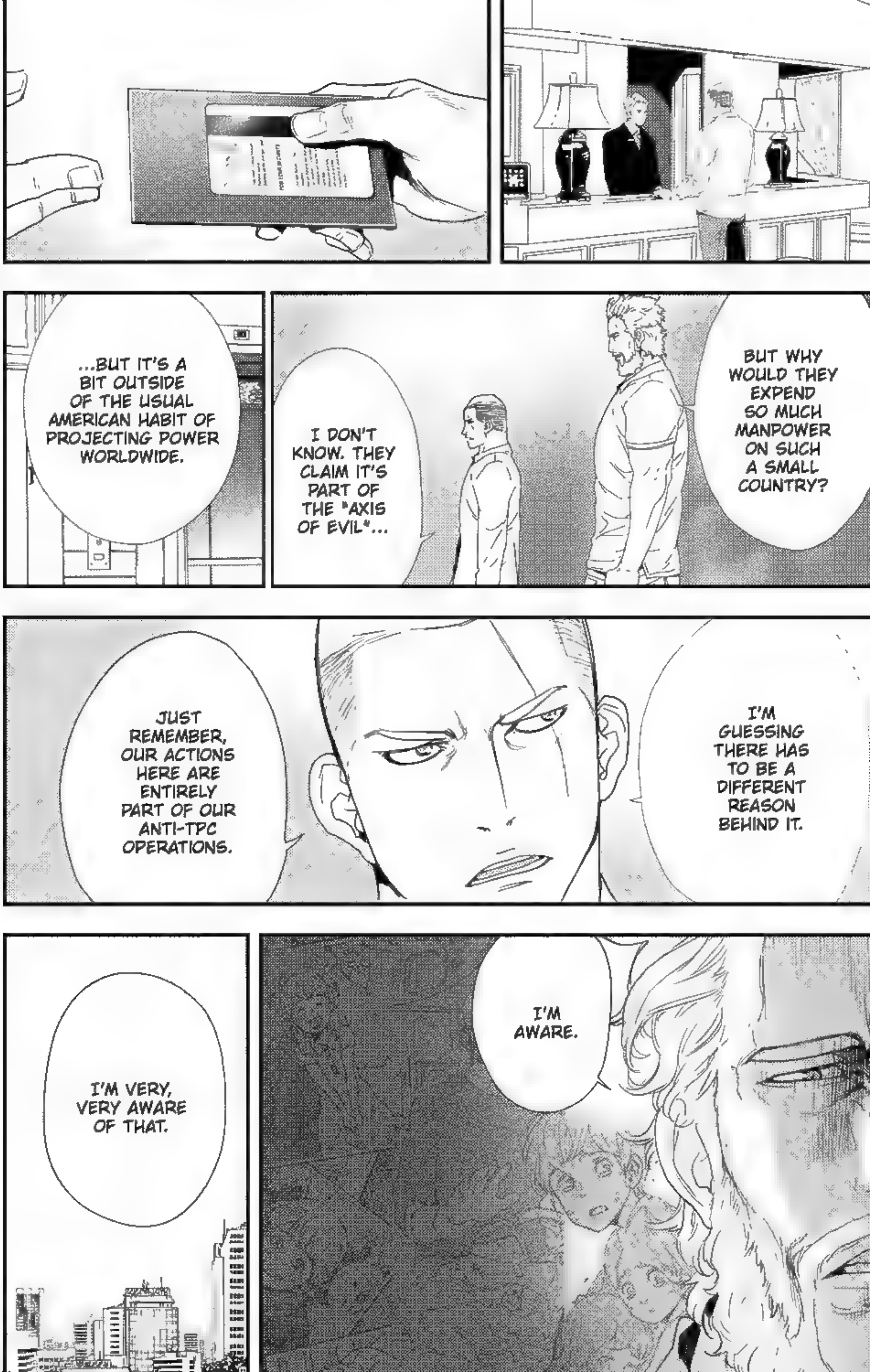


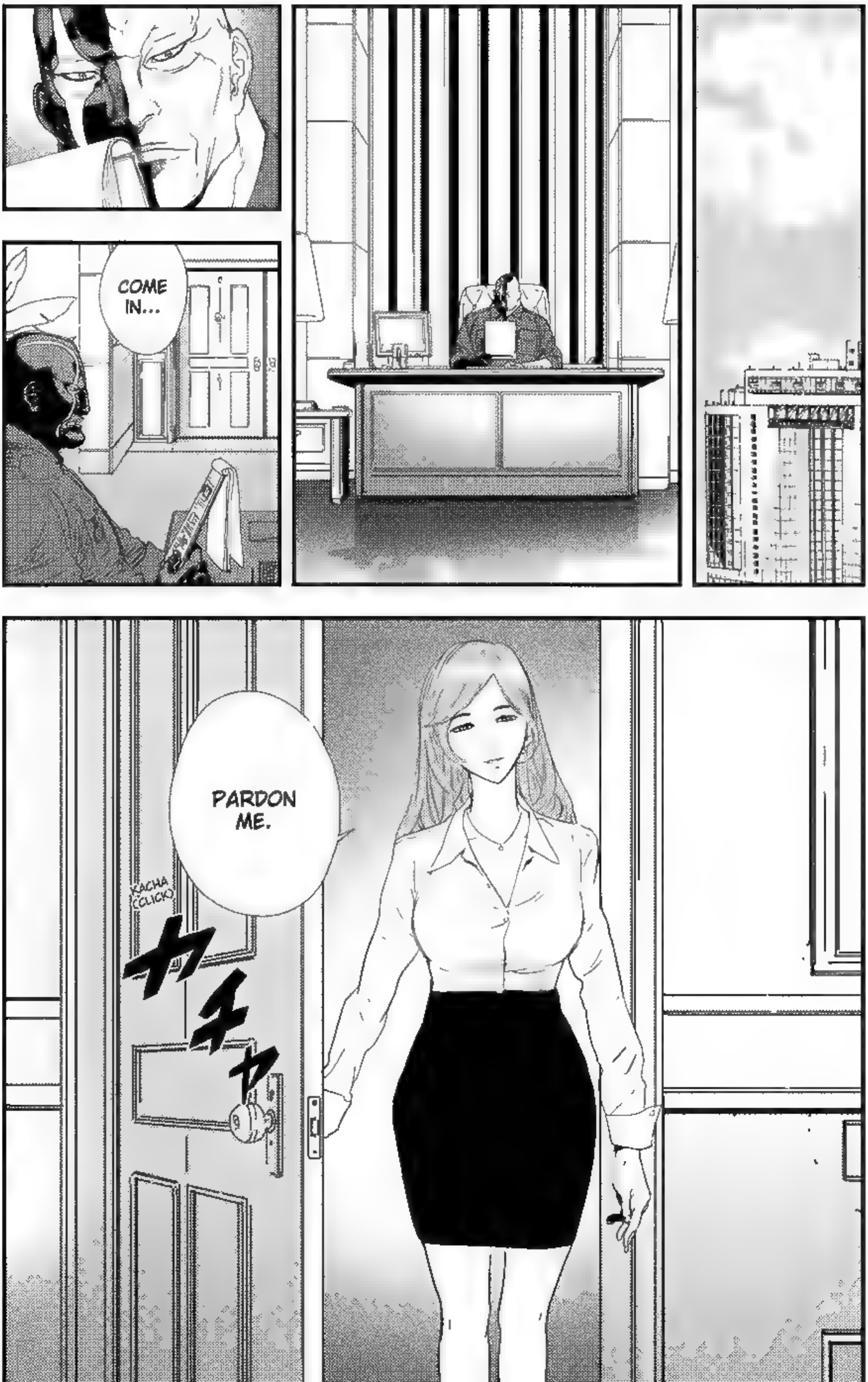
chapter 205

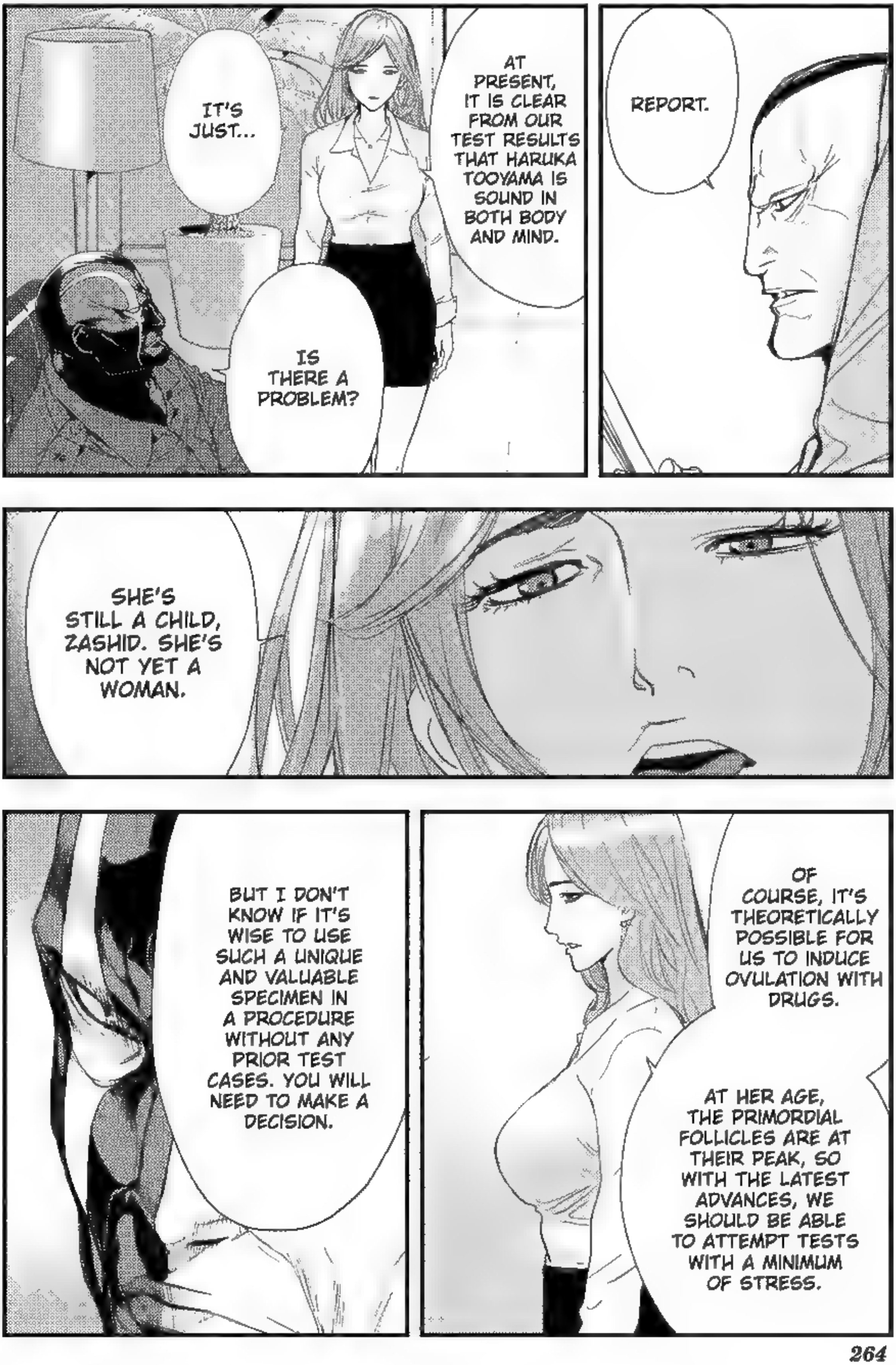


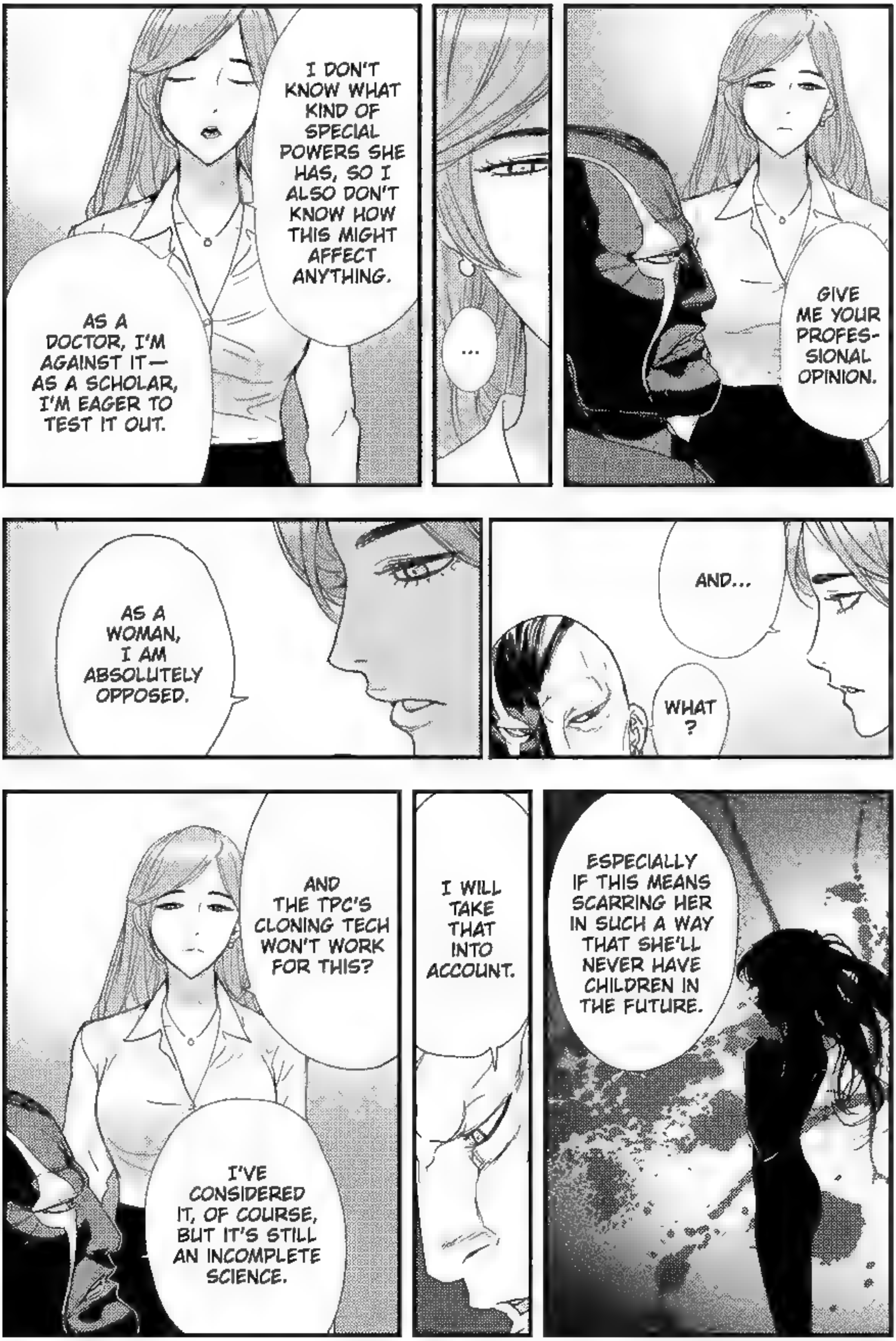

ZOTT, CAPITAL OF DUHANA
ブロロロ
BURORORO (VRRRM)
TAXI
カッ
KA (TAK)
カッ
KA

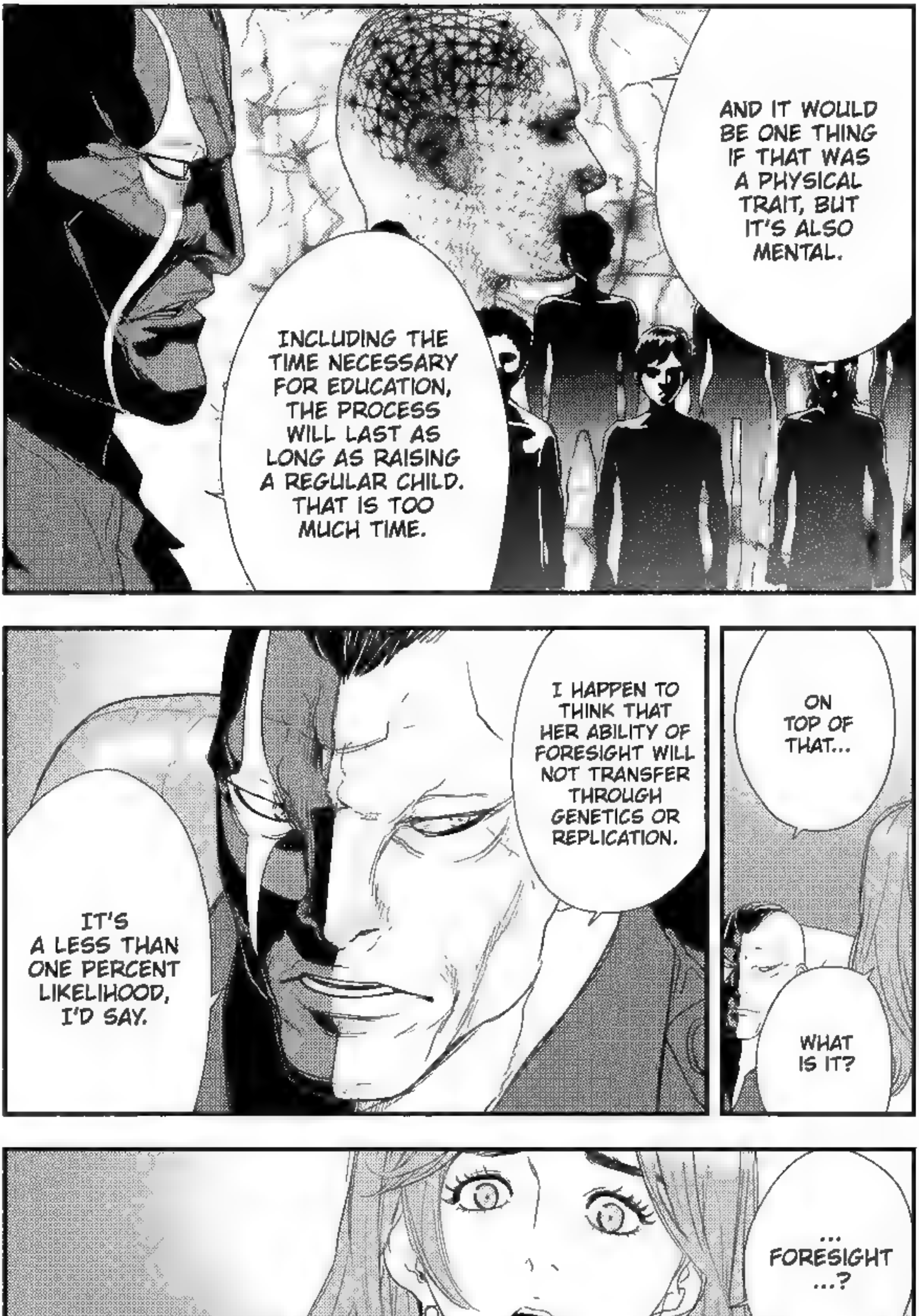

WHAT'S THE SITUATION WITH THE OTHER TEAMS?
BRAVO TEAM WILL BE COMING TO GALBOA WITH A WHITE-CENTRIC LINEUP.
CHARLIE AND DELTA ARE INFILTRATING THE DUHANA SIDE WITH MEMBERS OF THE OTHER RACES.
AND IS THIS ZASHID GUY AS BAD AS THE RUMORS MAKE HIM SOUND?
HE'S PROBABLY WORSE...
ONE OF THE FEW MEN THAT EVEN THE AMERICANS CAN'T FIND A WAY TO MAKE DISAPPEAR.
I HEAR THAT NINETY PERCENT OF THE PEOPLE THEY SEND AFTER HIM NEVER CAME BACK.
WOW!
AND THE REMAINING TEN PERCENT ARE IN COMAS.
WOW...

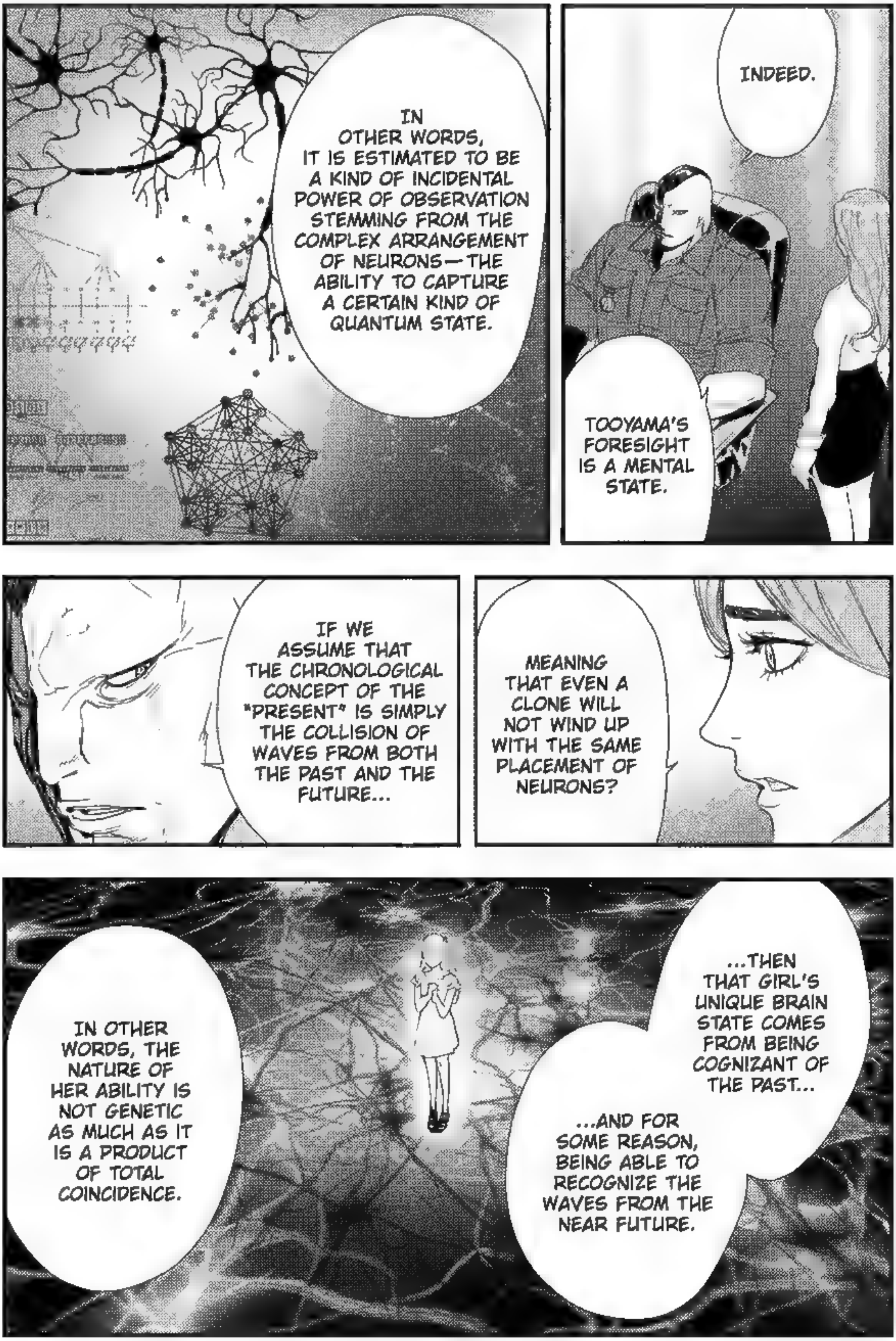

BUT WHY WOULD THEY EXPEND SO MUCH MANPOWER ON SUCH A SMALL COUNTRY?
I DON'T KNOW. THEY CLAIM IT'S PART OF THE "AXIS OF EVIL"...
...BUT IT'S A BIT OUTSIDE OF THE USUAL AMERICAN HABIT OF PROJECTING POWER WORLDWIDE.
I'M GUESSING THERE HAS TO BE A DIFFERENT REASON BEHIND IT.
JUST REMEMBER, OUR ACTIONS HERE ARE ENTIRELY PART OF OUR ANTI-TPC OPERATIONS.
I'M AWARE.
I'M VERY, VERY AWARE OF THAT.

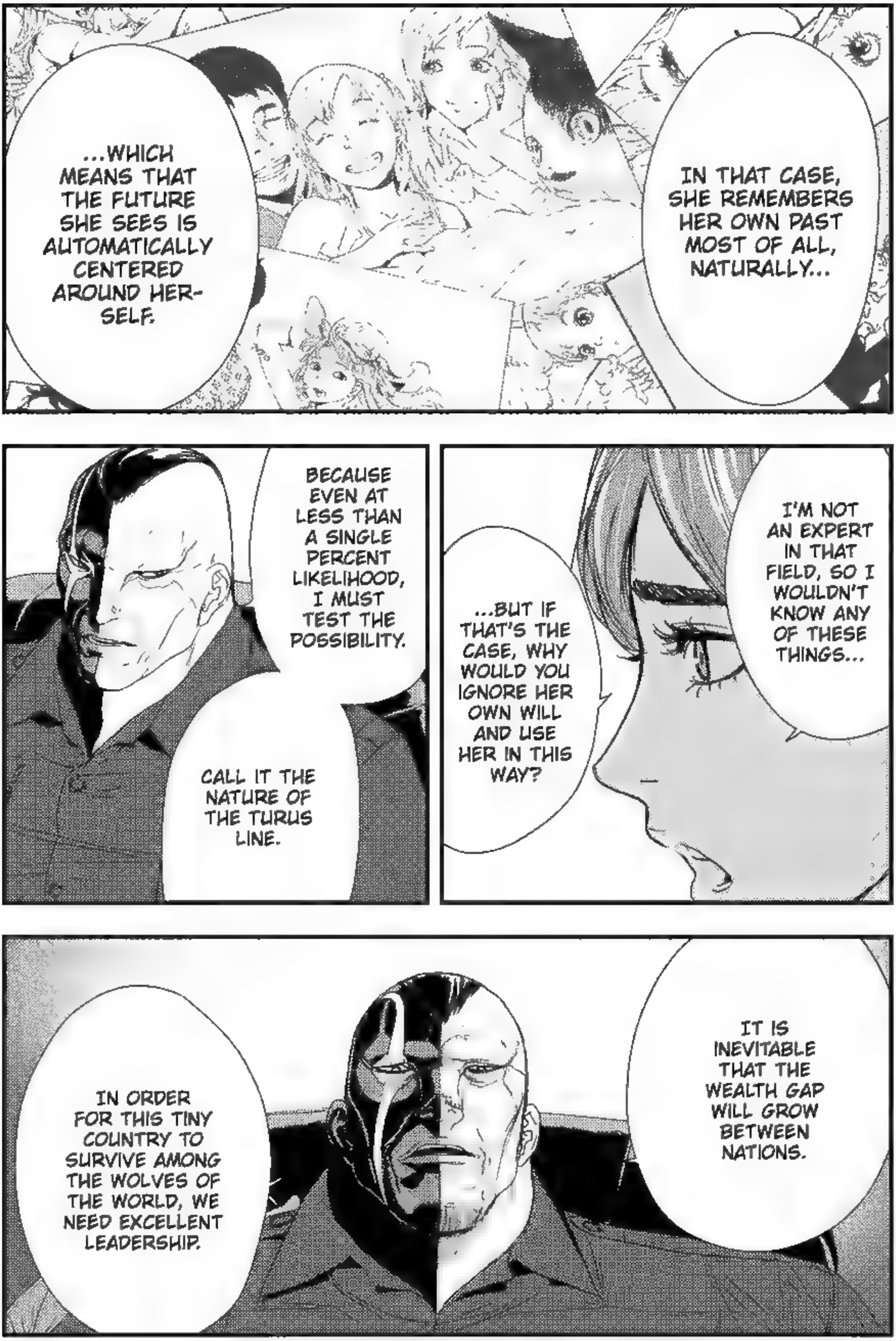

COME IN...
PARDON ME.
KACHA (CLICK)
カチャ

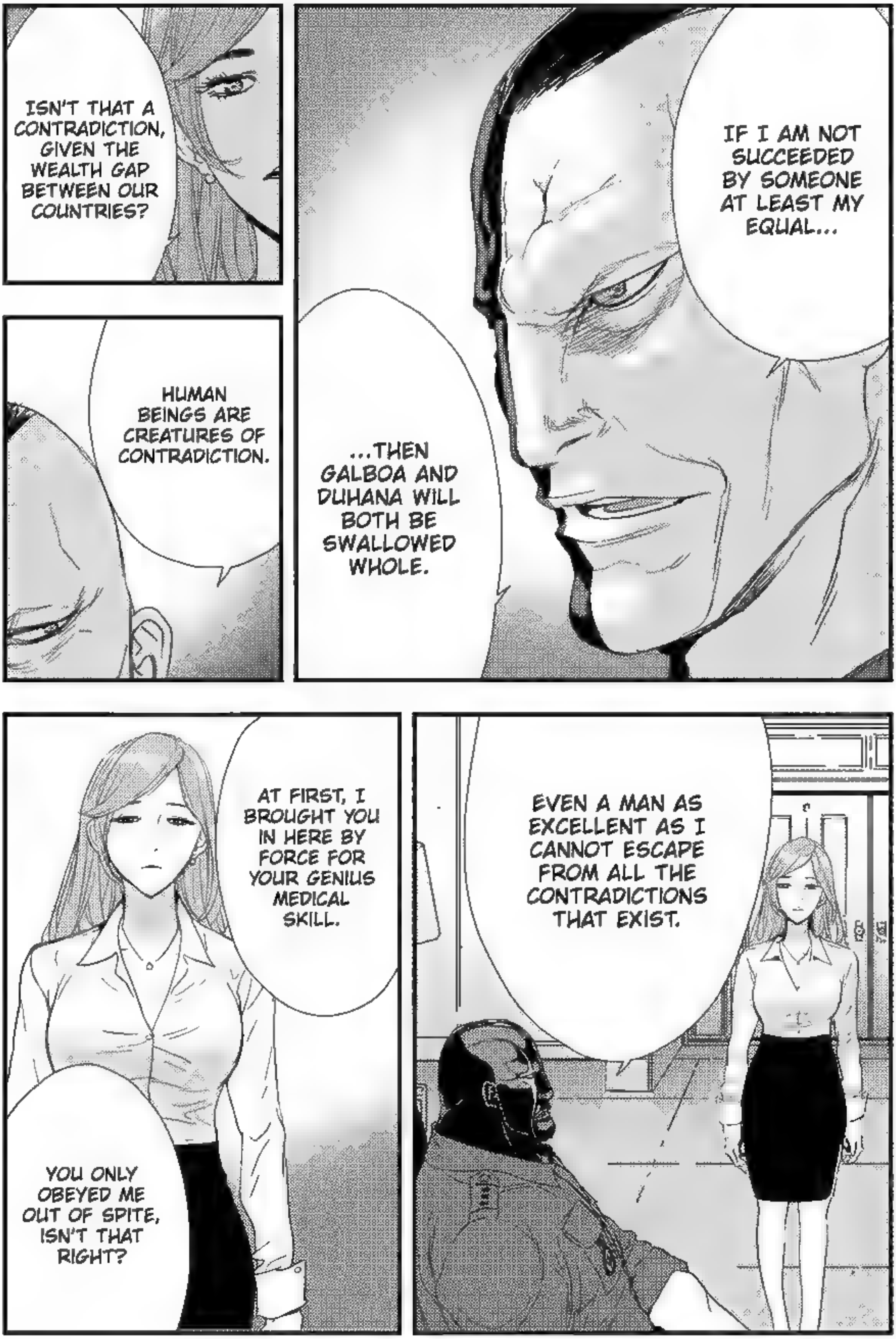

REPORT.
AT PRESENT, IT IS CLEAR FROM OUR TEST RESULTS THAT HARUKA TOOYAMA IS SOUND IN BOTH BODY AND MIND.
IT'S JUST...
IS THERE A PROBLEM?
SHE'S STILL A CHILD, ZASHID. SHE'S NOT YET A WOMAN.
OF COURSE, IT'S THEORETICALLY POSSIBLE FOR US TO INDUCE OVULATION WITH DRUGS.
AT HER AGE, THE PRIMORDIAL FOLLICLES ARE AT THEIR PEAK, SO WITH THE LATEST ADVANCES, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO ATTEMPT TESTS WITH A MINIMUM OF STRESS.
BUT I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S WISE TO USE SUCH A UNIQUE AND VALUABLE SPECIMEN IN A PROCEDURE WITHOUT ANY PRIOR TEST CASES. YOU WILL NEED TO MAKE A DECISION.

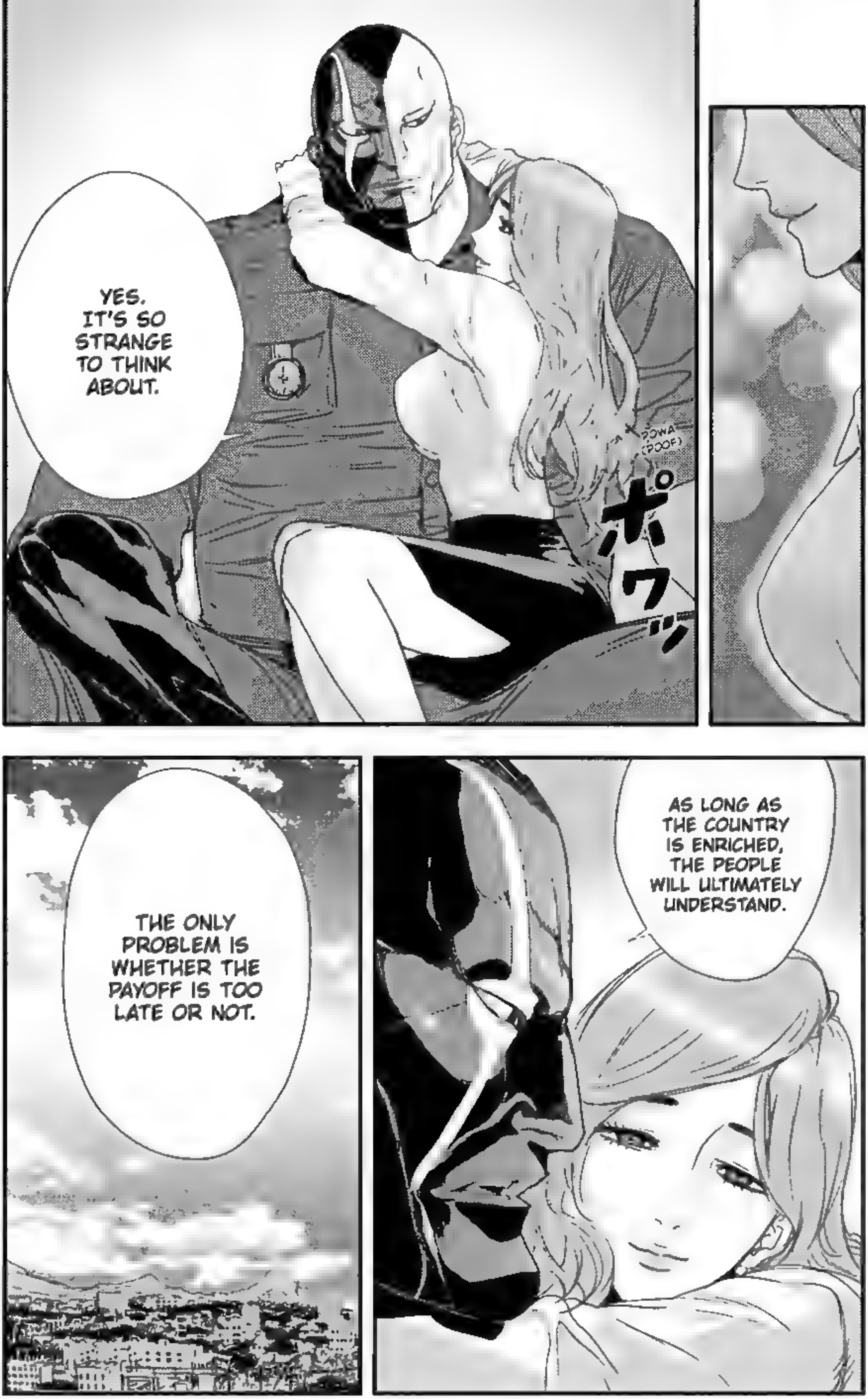

GIVE ME YOUR PROFESSIONAL OPINION.
...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF SPECIAL POWERS SHE HAS, SO I ALSO DON'T KNOW HOW THIS MIGHT AFFECT ANYTHING.
AS A DOCTOR, I'M AGAINST IT— AS A SCHOLAR, I'M EAGER TO TEST IT OUT.
AND...
WHAT?
AS A WOMAN, I AM ABSOLUTELY OPPOSED.
ESPECIALLY IF THIS MEANS SCARRING HER IN SUCH A WAY THAT SHE'LL NEVER HAVE CHILDREN IN THE FUTURE.
I WILL TAKE THAT INTO ACCOUNT.
AND THE TPC'S CLONING TECH WON'T WORK FOR THIS?
I'VE CONSIDERED IT, OF COURSE, BUT IT'S STILL AN INCOMPLETE SCIENCE.

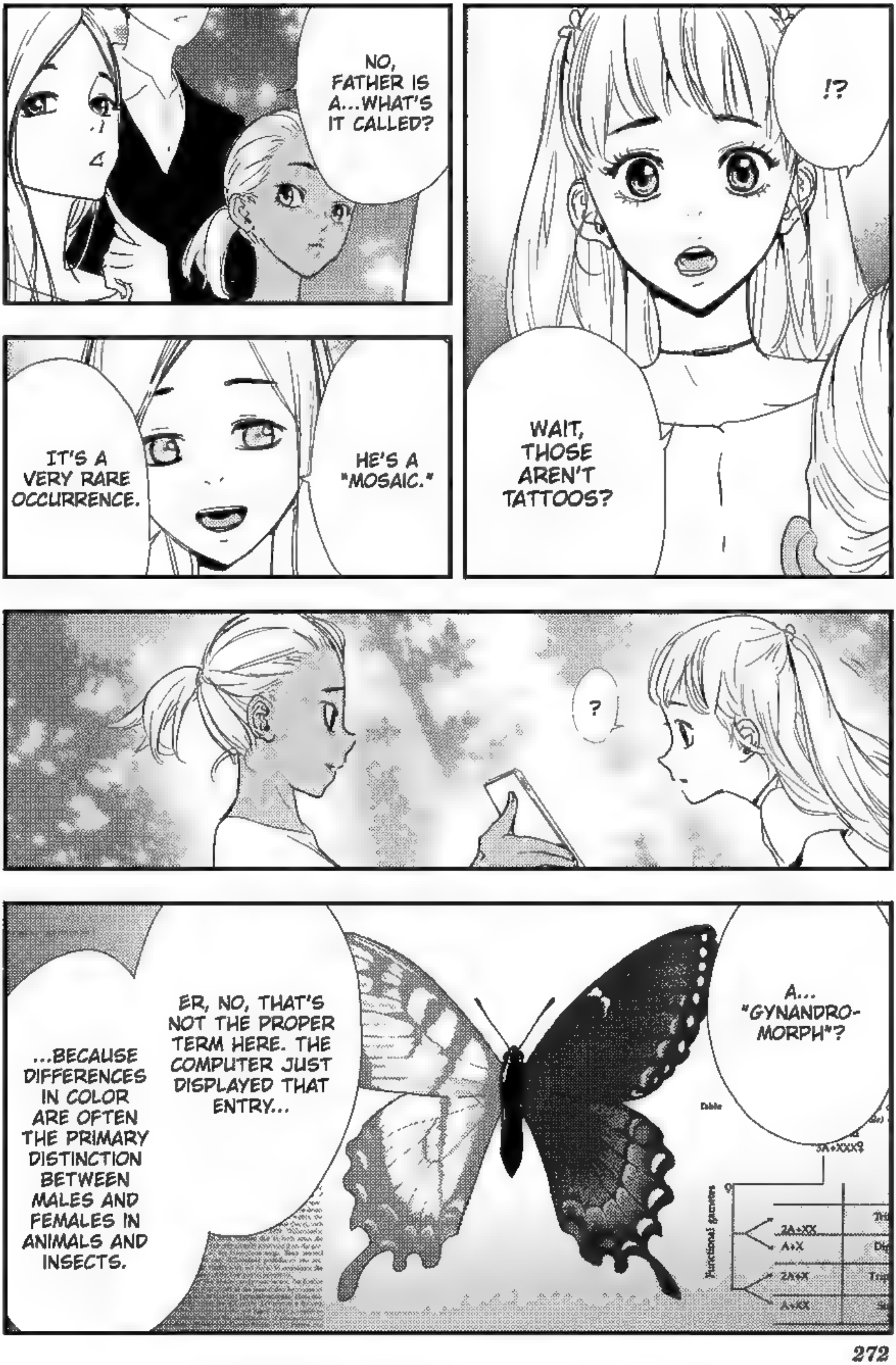

AND IT WOULD BE ONE THING IF THAT WAS A PHYSICAL TRAIT, BUT IT'S ALSO MENTAL.
INCLUDING THE TIME NECESSARY FOR EDUCATION, THE PROCESS WILL LAST AS LONG AS RAISING A REGULAR CHILD. THAT IS TOO MUCH TIME.
ON TOP OF THAT...
WHAT IS IT?
I HAPPEN TO THINK THAT HER ABILITY OF FORESIGHT WILL NOT TRANSFER THROUGH GENETICS OR REPLICATION.
IT'S A LESS THAN ONE PERCENT LIKELIHOOD, I'D SAY.
...FORESIGHT...?

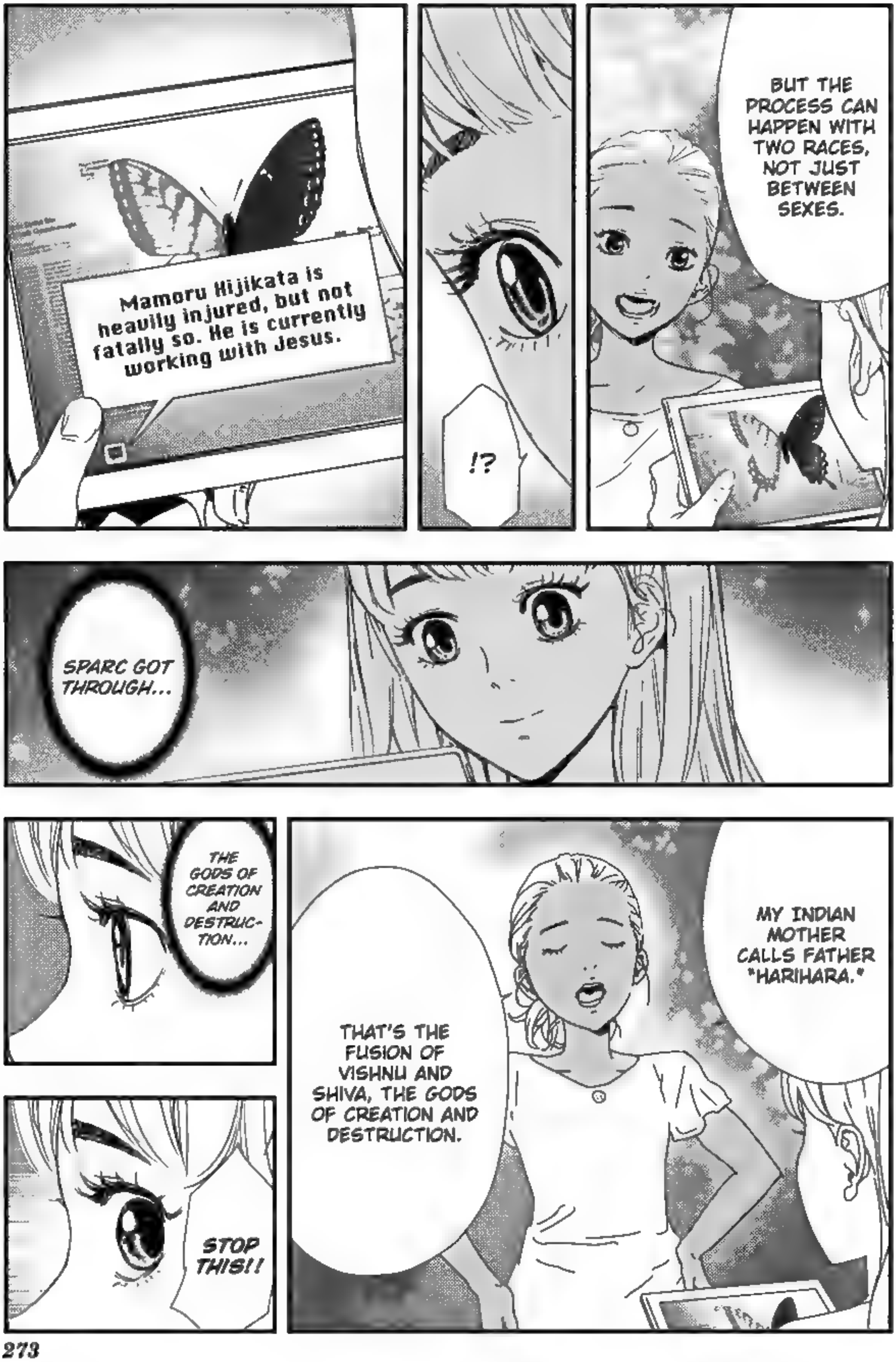

INDEED.
TOOYAMA'S FORESIGHT IS A MENTAL STATE.
IN OTHER WORDS, IT IS ESTIMATED TO BE A KIND OF INCIDENTAL POWER OF OBSERVATION STEMMING FROM THE COMPLEX ARRANGEMENT OF NEURONS—THE ABILITY TO CAPTURE A CERTAIN KIND OF QUANTUM STATE.
MEANING THAT EVEN A CLONE WILL NOT WIND UP WITH THE SAME PLACEMENT OF NEURONS?
IF WE ASSUME THAT THE CHRONOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF THE "PRESENT" IS SIMPLY THE COLLISION OF WAVES FROM BOTH THE PAST AND THE FUTURE...
...THEN THAT GIRL'S UNIQUE BRAIN STATE COMES FROM BEING COGNIZANT OF THE PAST...
...AND FOR SOME REASON, BEING ABLE TO RECOGNIZE THE WAVES FROM THE NEAR FUTURE.
IN OTHER WORDS, THE NATURE OF HER ABILITY IS NOT GENETIC AS MUCH AS IT IS A PRODUCT OF TOTAL COINCIDENCE.

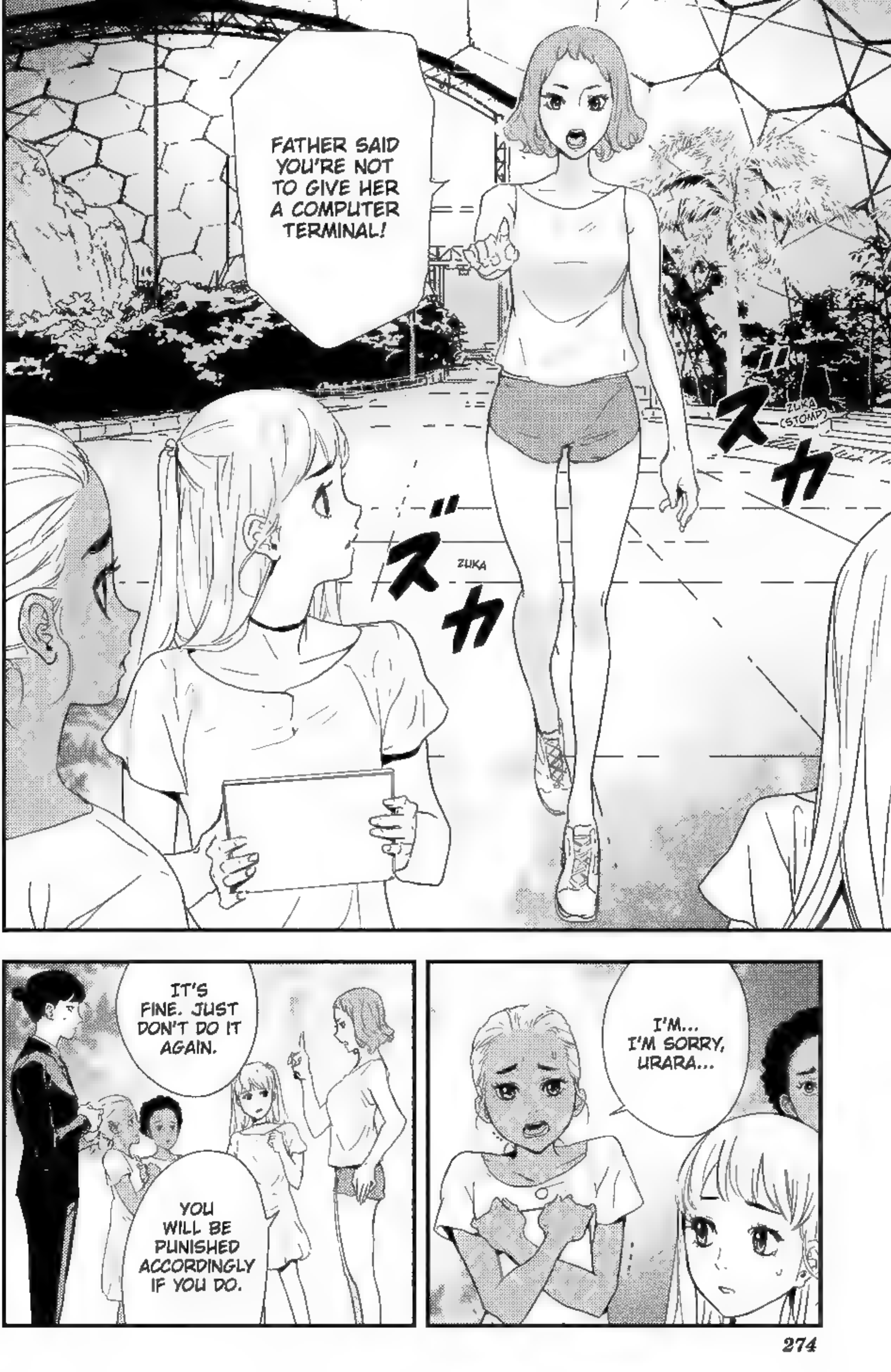

IN THAT CASE, SHE REMEMBERS HER OWN PAST MOST OF ALL, NATURALLY...
...WHICH MEANS THAT THE FUTURE SHE SEES IS AUTOMATICALLY CENTERED AROUND HERSELF.
I'M NOT AN EXPERT IN THAT FIELD, SO I WOULDN'T KNOW ANY OF THESE THINGS...
...BUT IF THAT'S THE CASE, WHY WOULD YOU IGNORE HER OWN WILL AND USE HER IN THIS WAY?
BECAUSE EVEN AT LESS THAN A SINGLE PERCENT LIKELIHOOD, I MUST TEST THE POSSIBILITY.
CALL IT THE NATURE OF THE TURUS LINE.
IT IS INEVITABLE THAT THE WEALTH GAP WILL GROW BETWEEN NATIONS.
IN ORDER FOR THIS TINY COUNTRY TO SURVIVE AMONG THE WOLVES OF THE WORLD, WE NEED EXCELLENT LEADERSHIP.

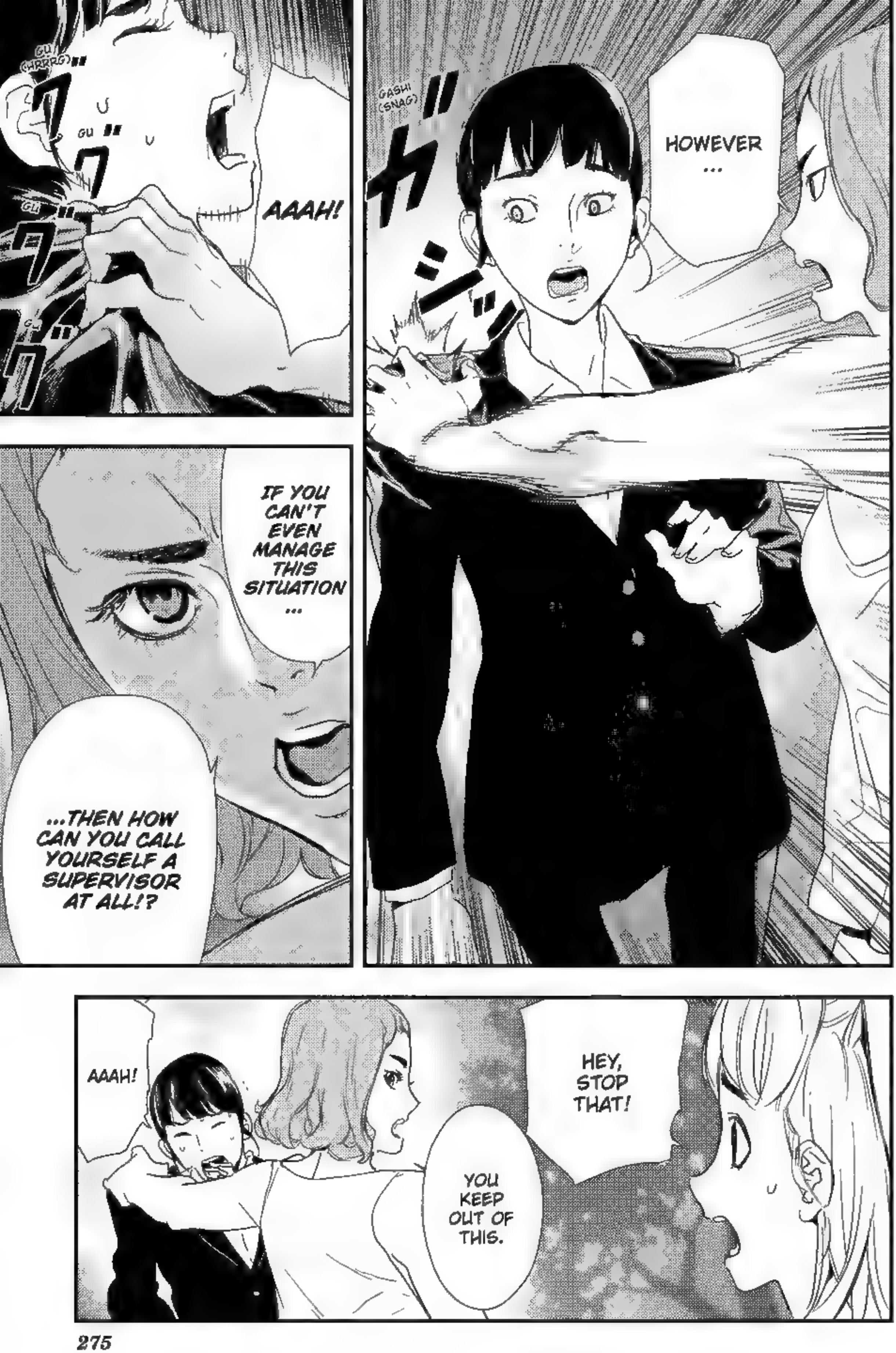

IF I AM NOT SUCCEEDED BY SOMEONE AT LEAST MY EQUAL...
...THEN GALBOA AND DUHANA WILL BOTH BE SWALLOWED WHOLE.
ISN'T THAT A CONTRADICTION, GIVEN THE WEALTH GAP BETWEEN OUR COUNTRIES?
HUMAN BEINGS ARE CREATURES OF CONTRADICTION.
EVEN A MAN AS EXCELLENT AS I CANNOT ESCAPE FROM ALL THE CONTRADICTIONS THAT EXIST.
AT FIRST, I BROUGHT YOU IN HERE BY FORCE FOR YOUR GENIUS MEDICAL SKILL.
YOU ONLY OBEYED ME OUT OF SPITE, ISN'T THAT RIGHT?

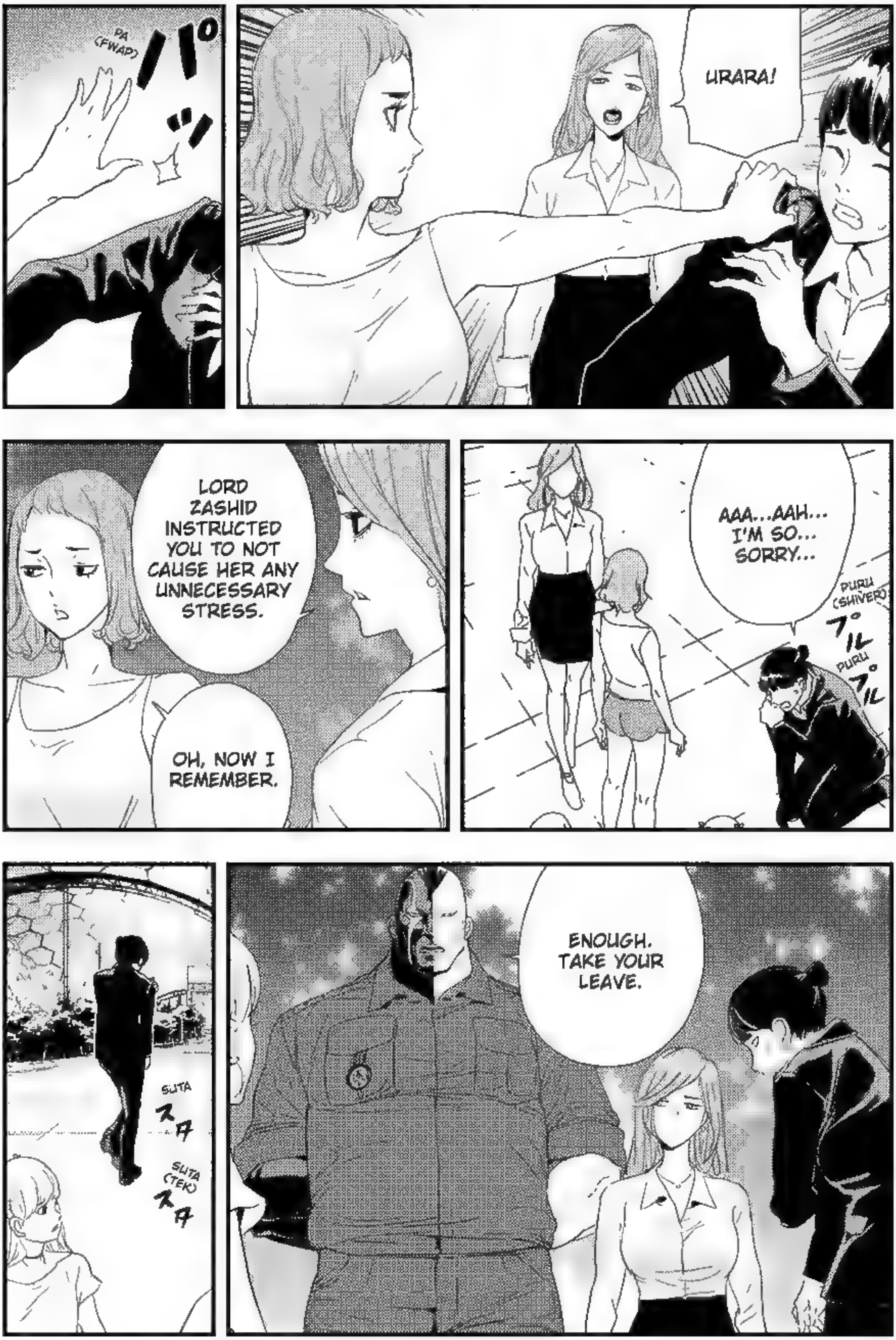

YES.
IT'S SO STRANGE TO THINK ABOUT.
ポワッ
POWA (POOF)
AS LONG AS THE COUNTRY IS ENRICHED, THE PEOPLE WILL ULTIMATELY UNDERSTAND.
THE ONLY PROBLEM IS WHETHER THE PAYOFF IS TOO LATE OR NOT.

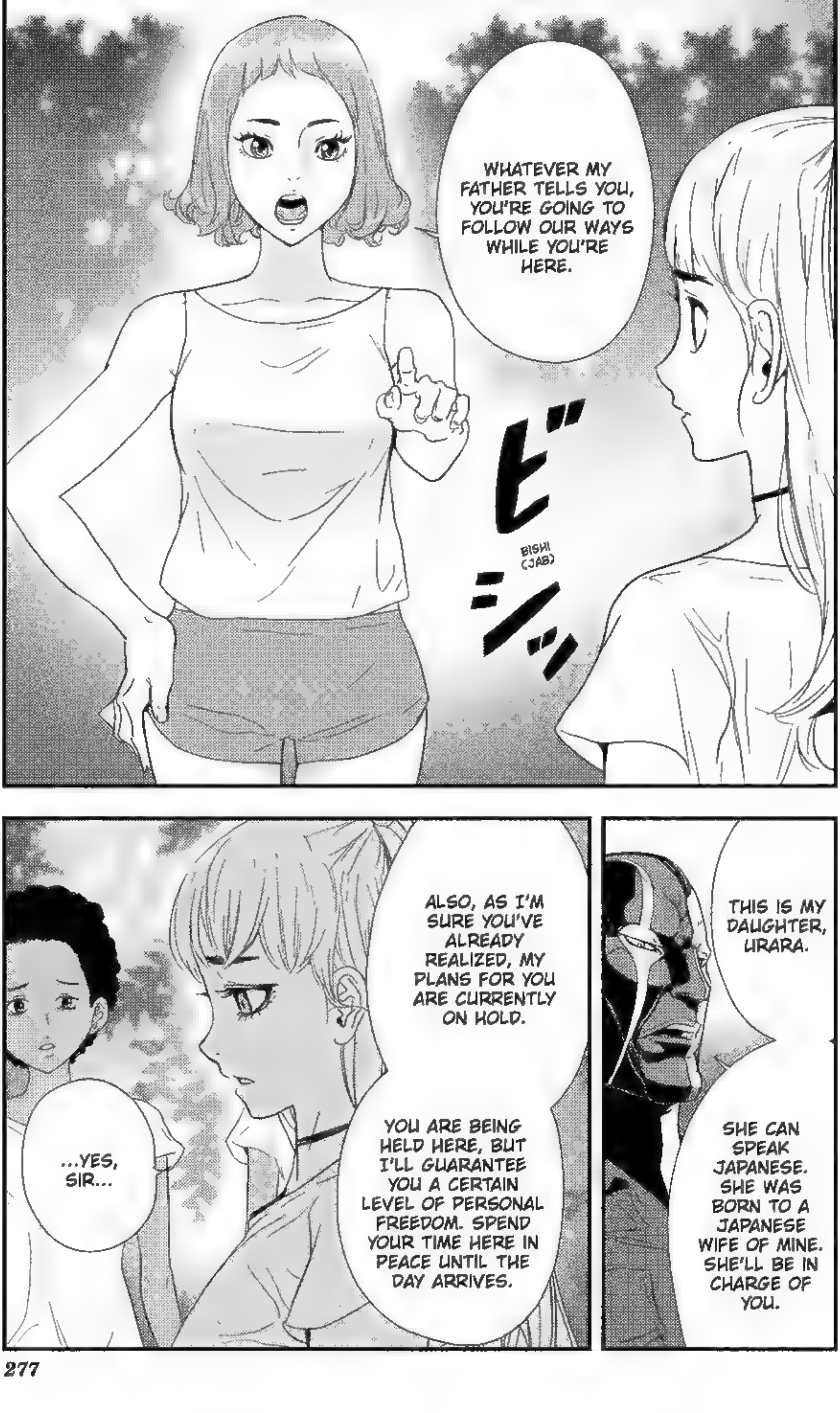

!?
WAIT, THOSE AREN'T TATTOOS?
NO, FATHER IS A...WHAT'S IT CALLED?
HE'S A "MOSAIC."
IT'S A VERY RARE OCCURRENCE.
?
A... "GYNANDROMORPH"?
ER, NO, THAT'S NOT THE PROPER TERM HERE. THE COMPUTER JUST DISPLAYED THAT ENTRY...
...BECAUSE DIFFERENCES IN COLOR ARE OFTEN THE PRIMARY DISTINCTION BETWEEN MALES AND FEMALES IN ANIMALS AND INSECTS.
Table
3A+XXX♀
Functional gametes
2A+XX
A+X
2A+X
A+XX

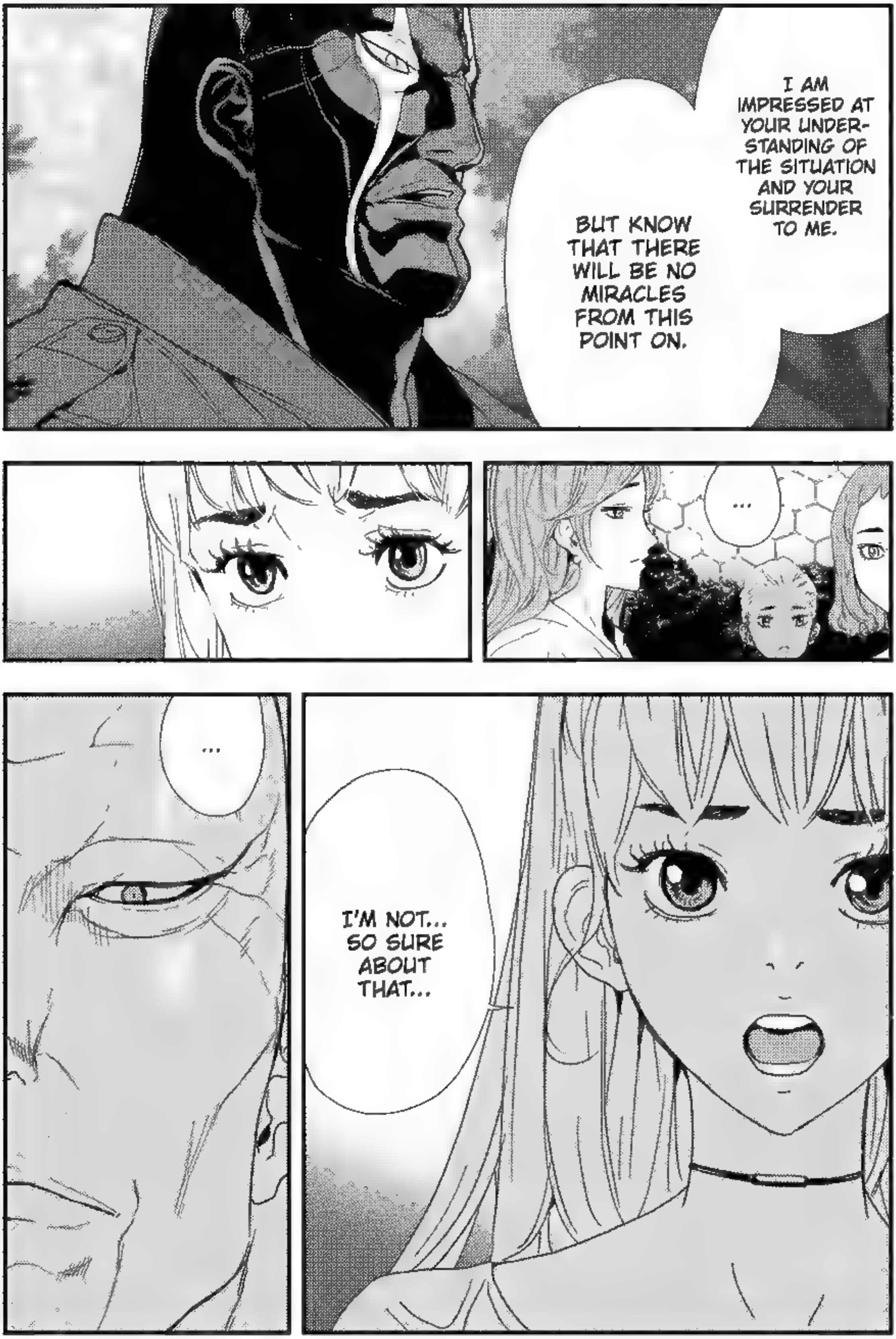

BUT THE PROCESS CAN HAPPEN WITH TWO RACES, NOT JUST BETWEEN SEXES.
!?
Mamoru Hijikata is heavily injured, but not fatally so. He is currently working with Jesus.
SPARC GOT THROUGH...
MY INDIAN MOTHER CALLS FATHER "HARIHARA."
THAT'S THE FUSION OF VISHNU AND SHIVA, THE GODS OF CREATION AND DESTRUCTION.
THE GODS OF CREATION AND DESTRUCTION...
STOP THIS!!

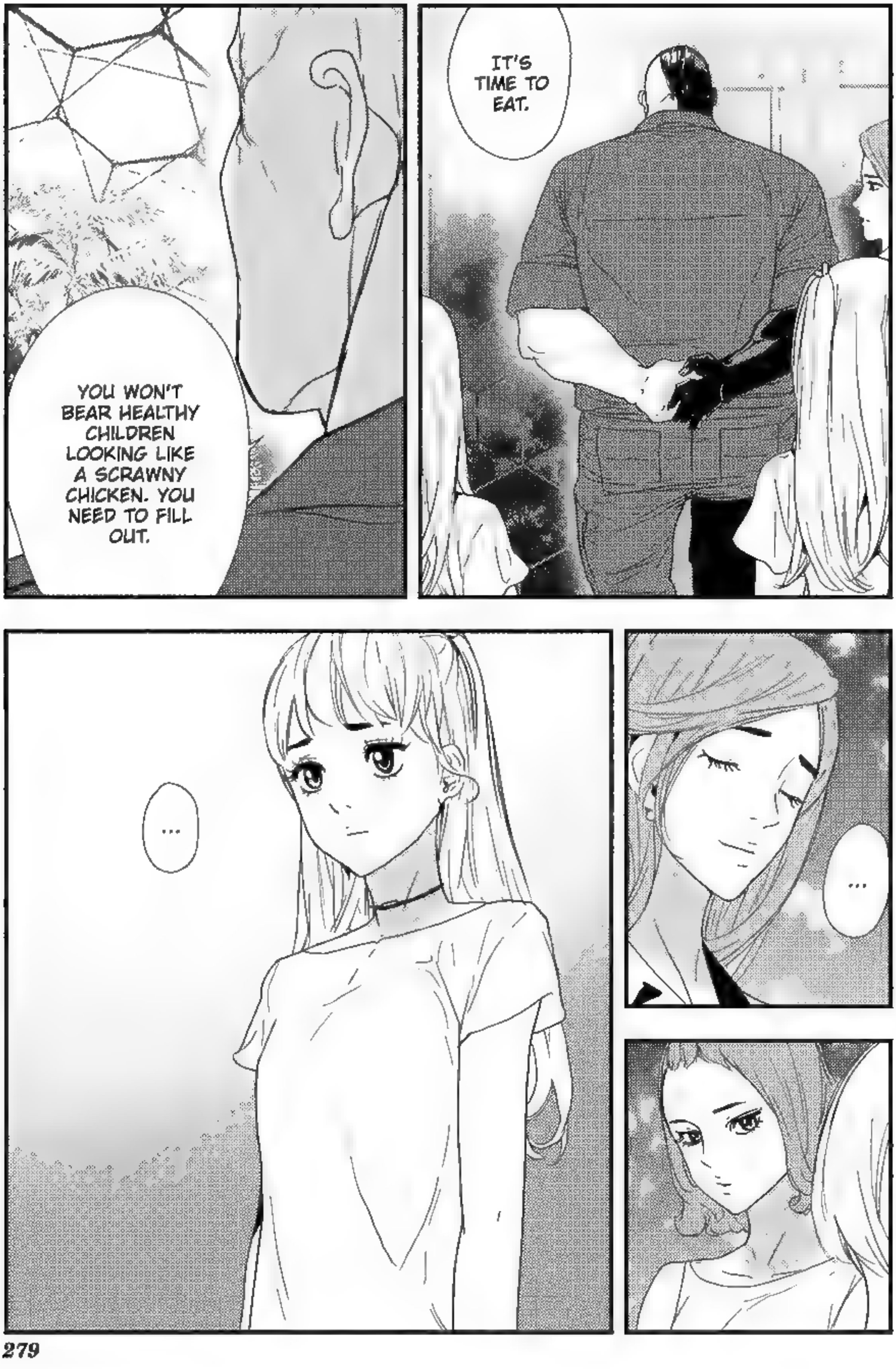

FATHER SAID YOU'RE NOT TO GIVE HER A COMPUTER TERMINAL!
ズカ
ZUKA (STOMP)
ズカ
ZUKA
I'M... I'M SORRY, URARA...
IT'S FINE. JUST DON'T DO IT AGAIN.
YOU WILL BE PUNISHED ACCORDINGLY IF YOU DO.

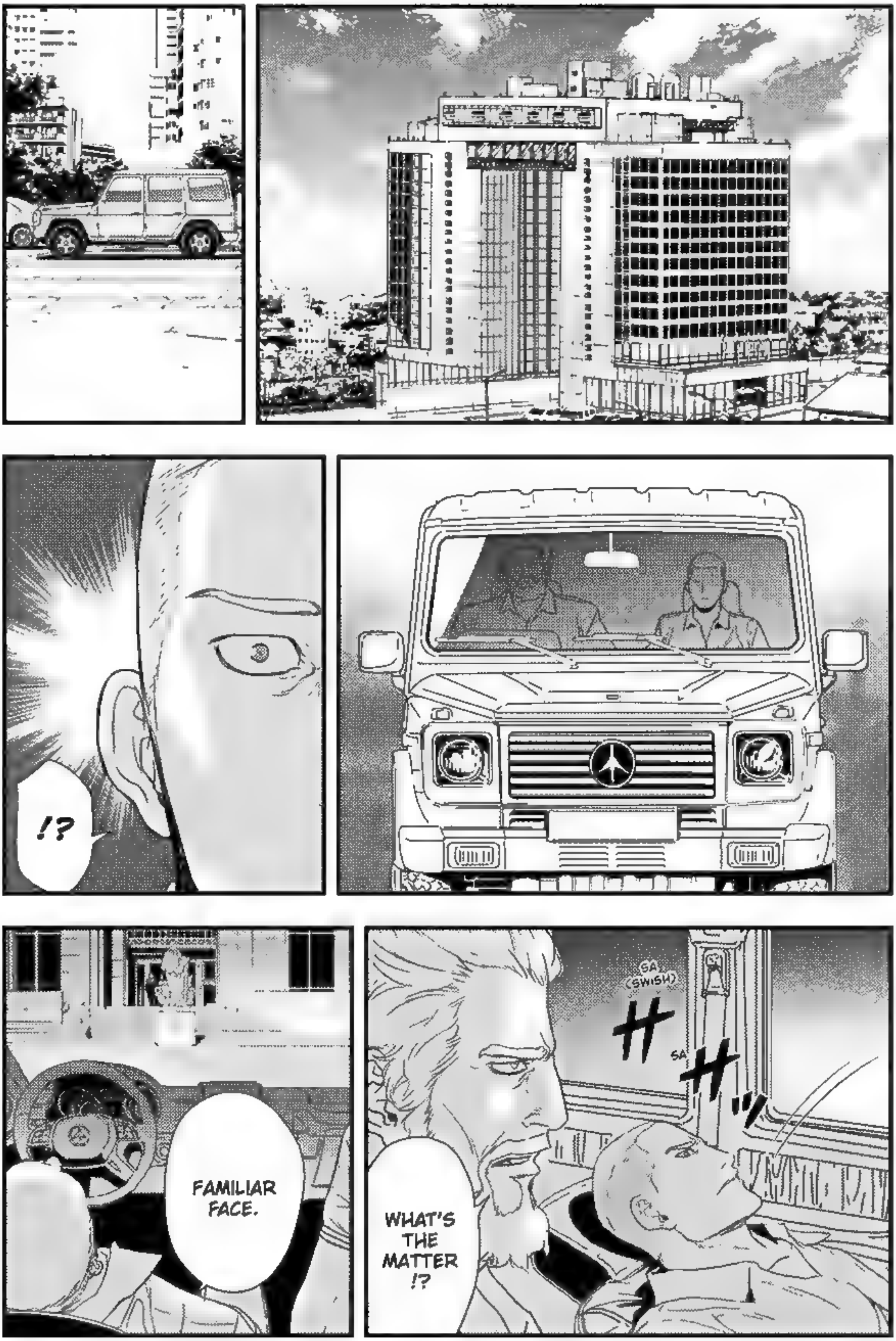

GASHI (SNAG)
HOWEVER ...
GU (HRRRG)
GU
GU
GU
AAAH!
IF YOU CAN'T EVEN MANAGE THIS SITUATION ...
...THEN HOW CAN YOU CALL YOURSELF A SUPERVISOR AT ALL!?
HEY, STOP THAT!
YOU KEEP OUT OF THIS.
AAAH!

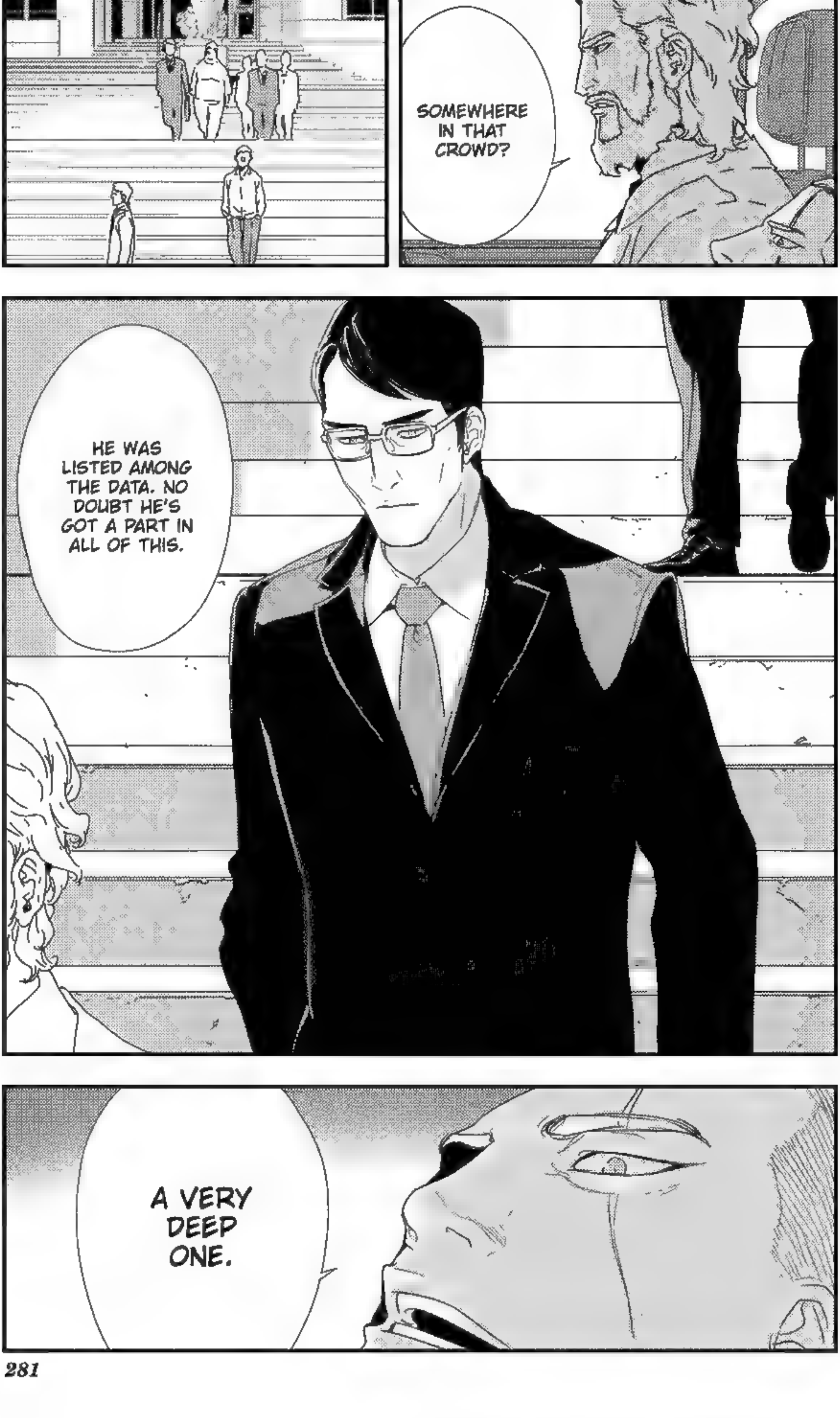

URARA!
PA (FWAP)
パッ
AAA...AAH... I'M SO... SORRY...
PURU (SHIVER)
プル
PURU
プル
LORD ZASHID INSTRUCTED YOU TO NOT CAUSE HER ANY UNNECESSARY STRESS.
OH, NOW I REMEMBER.
ENOUGH. TAKE YOUR LEAVE.
SUTA
スタ
SUTA (TEK)
スタ


WHATEVER MY FATHER TELLS YOU, YOU'RE GOING TO FOLLOW OUR WAYS WHILE YOU'RE HERE.
ビシッ
BISHI (JAB)
THIS IS MY DAUGHTER, URARA.
SHE CAN SPEAK JAPANESE. SHE WAS BORN TO A JAPANESE WIFE OF MINE. SHE'LL BE IN CHARGE OF YOU.
ALSO, AS I'M SURE YOU'VE ALREADY REALIZED, MY PLANS FOR YOU ARE CURRENTLY ON HOLD.
YOU ARE BEING HELD HERE, BUT I'LL GUARANTEE YOU A CERTAIN LEVEL OF PERSONAL FREEDOM. SPEND YOUR TIME HERE IN PEACE UNTIL THE DAY ARRIVES.
...YES, SIR...

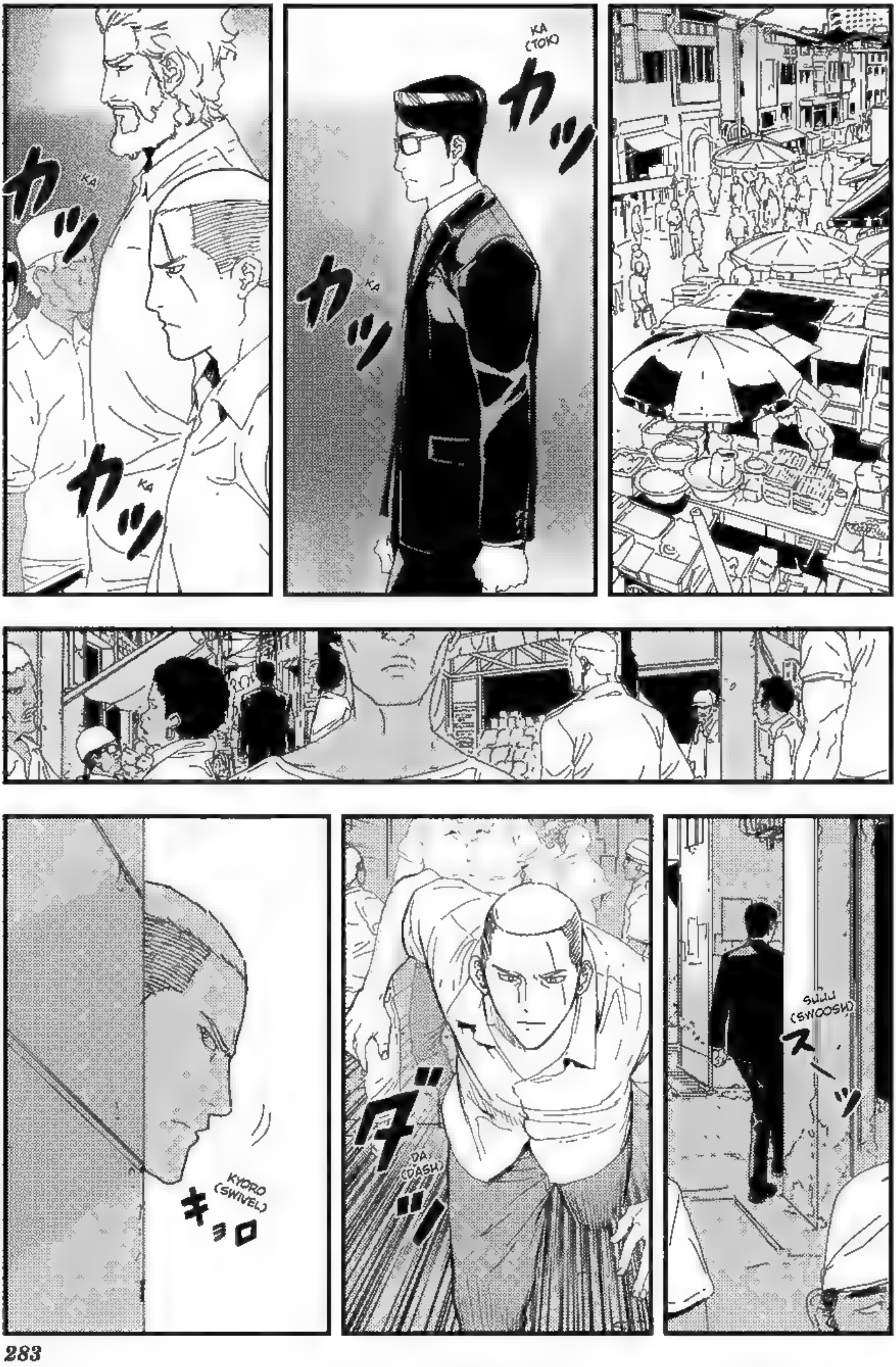

I AM IMPRESSED AT YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE SITUATION AND YOUR SURRENDER TO ME.
BUT KNOW THAT THERE WILL BE NO MIRACLES FROM THIS POINT ON.
...
I'M NOT... SO SURE ABOUT THAT...
...


IT'S TIME TO EAT.
YOU WON'T BEAR HEALTHY CHILDREN LOOKING LIKE A SCRAWNY CHICKEN. YOU NEED TO FILL OUT.
...
...


!?
SA (SWISH)
SA
WHAT'S THE MATTER !?
FAMILIAR FACE.


SOMEWHERE IN THAT CROWD?
HE WAS LISTED AMONG THE DATA. NO DOUBT HE'S GOT A PART IN ALL OF THIS.
A VERY DEEP ONE.

Until Death do us Part


KA (TOK)
カッ
KA
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KA
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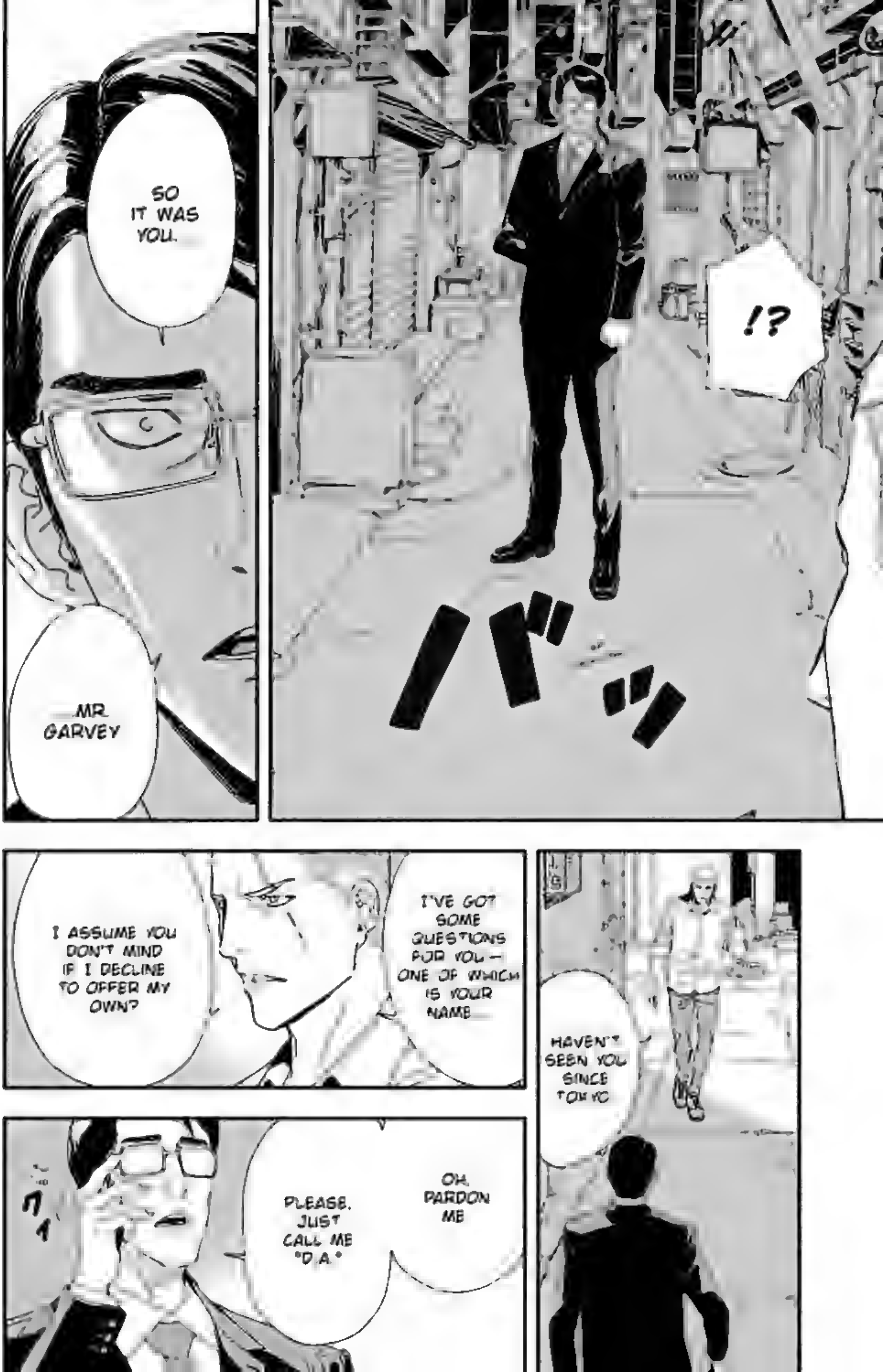
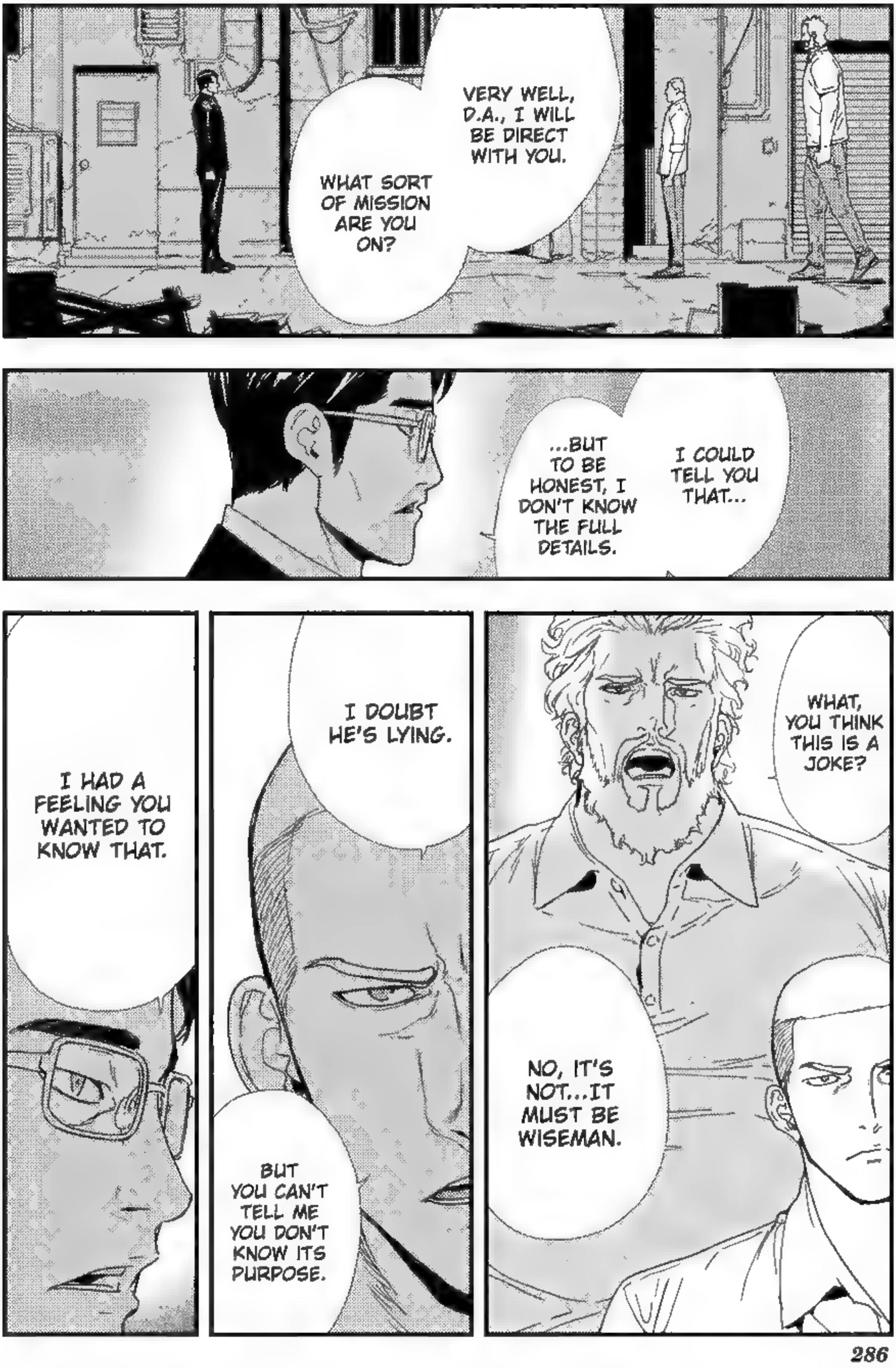
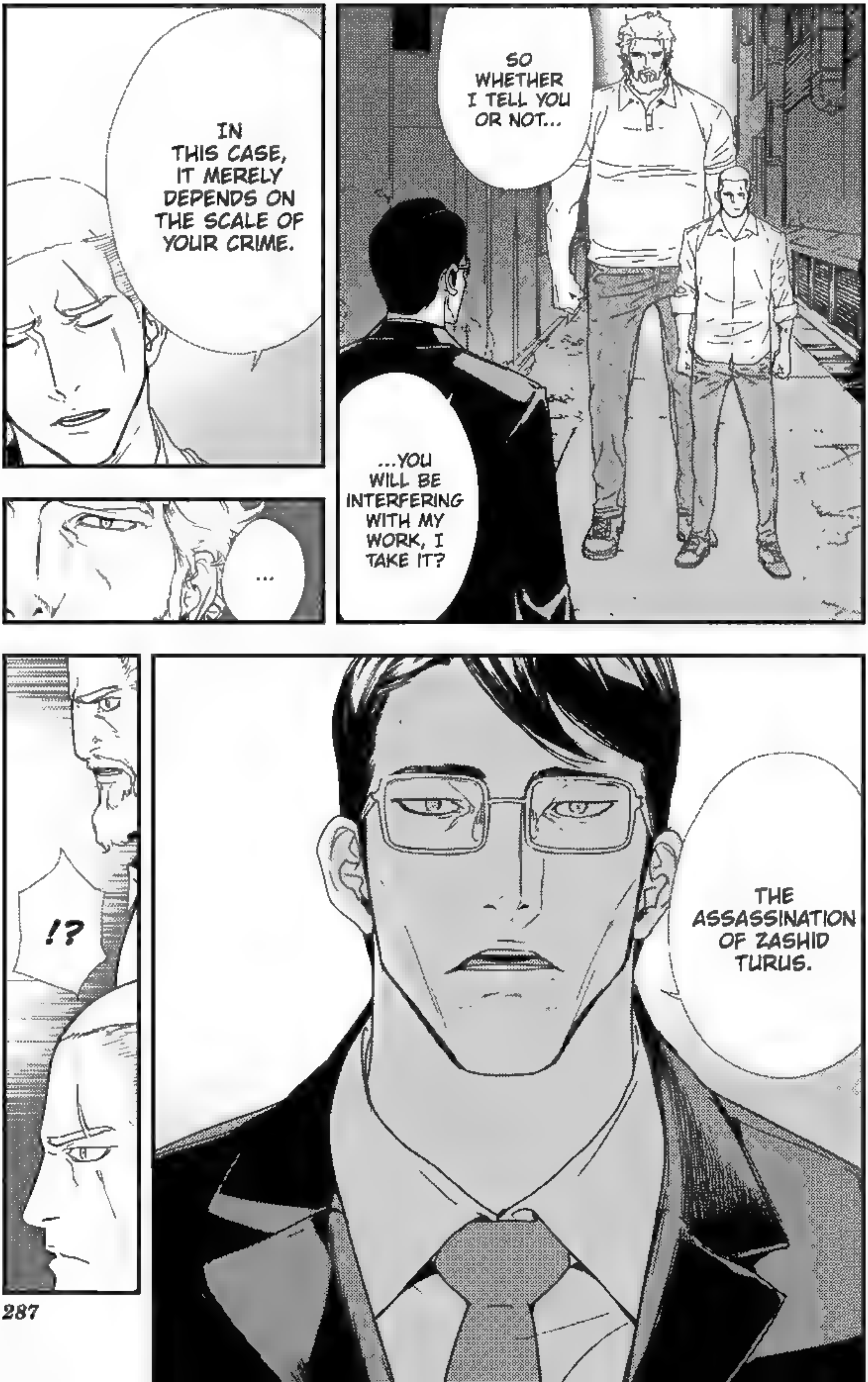
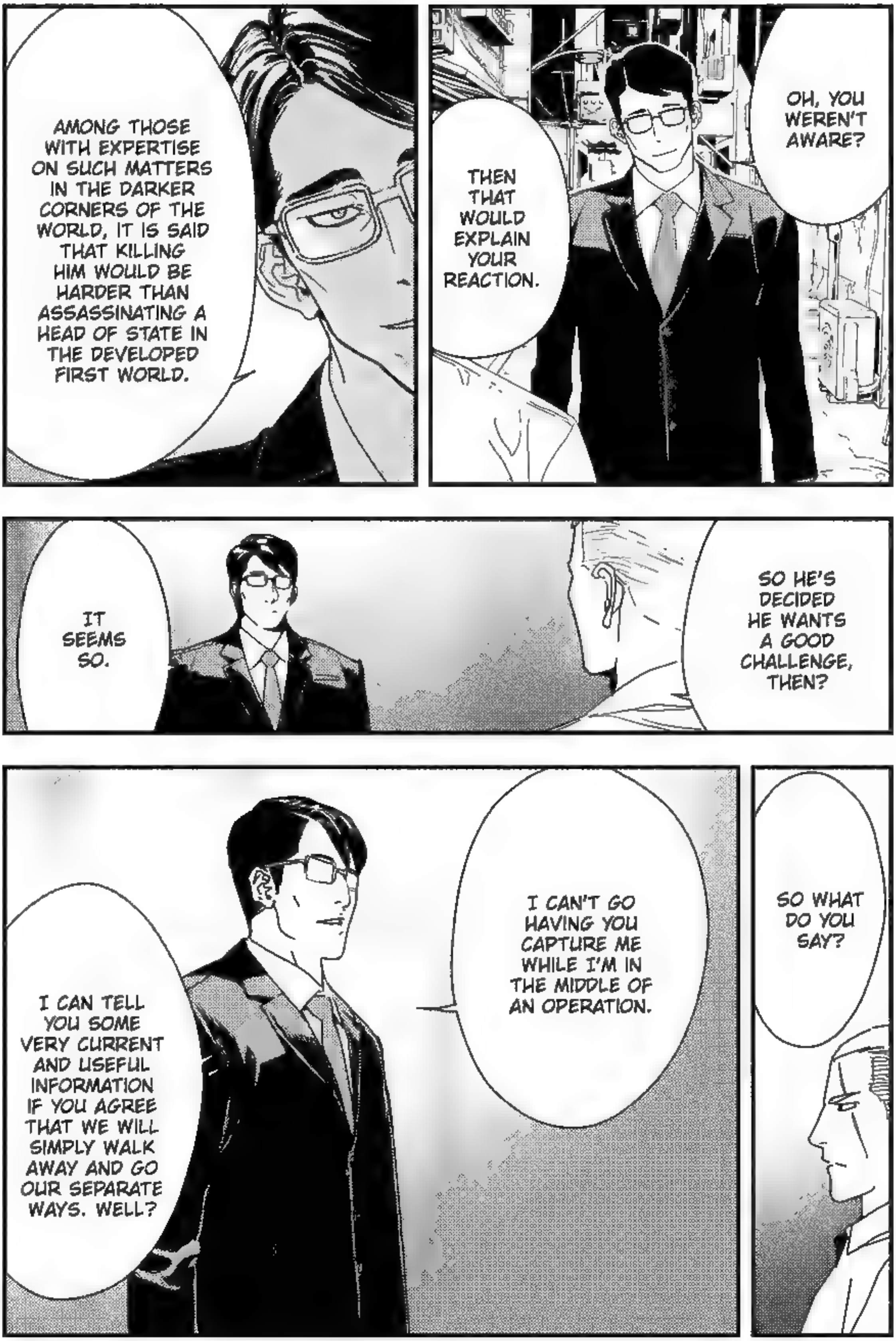
SUUU (SWOOSH)
スーッ
DA (DASH)
ダッ
KYORO (SWIVEL)
キョロ

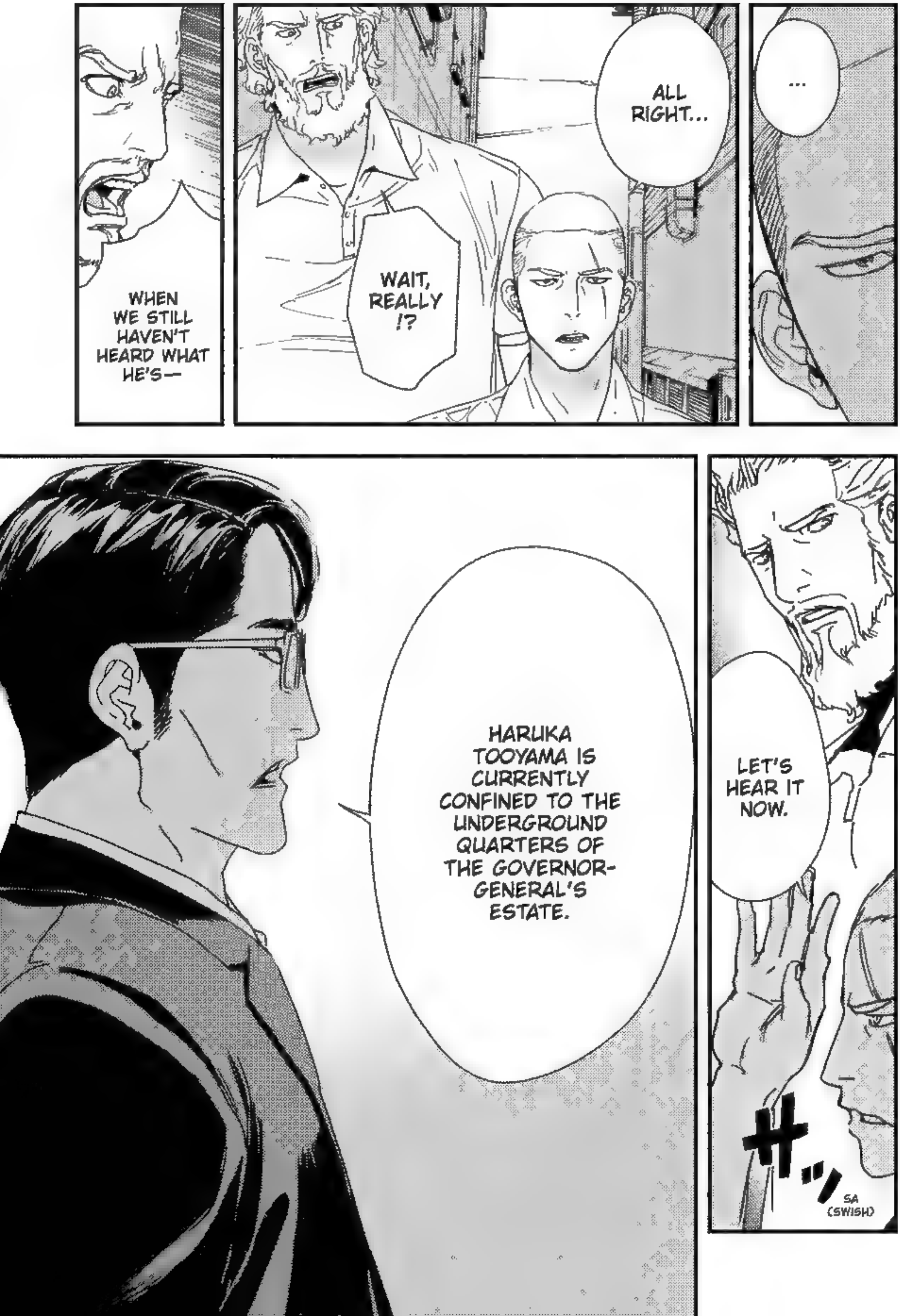

!?
バッ
SO IT WAS YOU.
...MR GARVEY
HAVEN'T SEEN YOU SINCE TOKYO
I'VE GOT SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU— ONE OF WHICH IS YOUR NAME...
I ASSUME YOU DON'T MIND IF I DECLINE TO OFFER MY OWN?
OH, PARDON ME
PLEASE. JUST CALL ME "D.A."
クイ

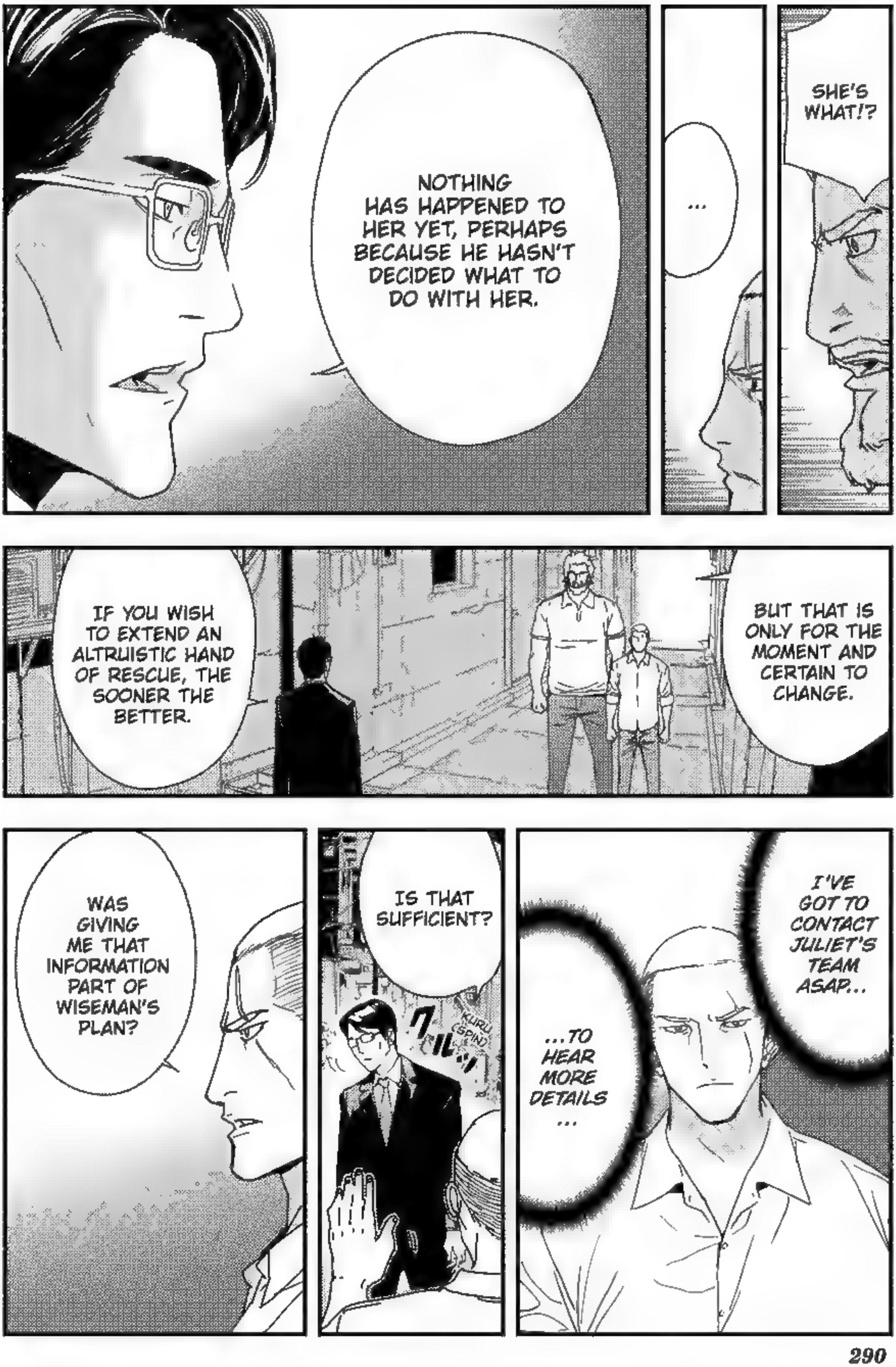
chapter 206

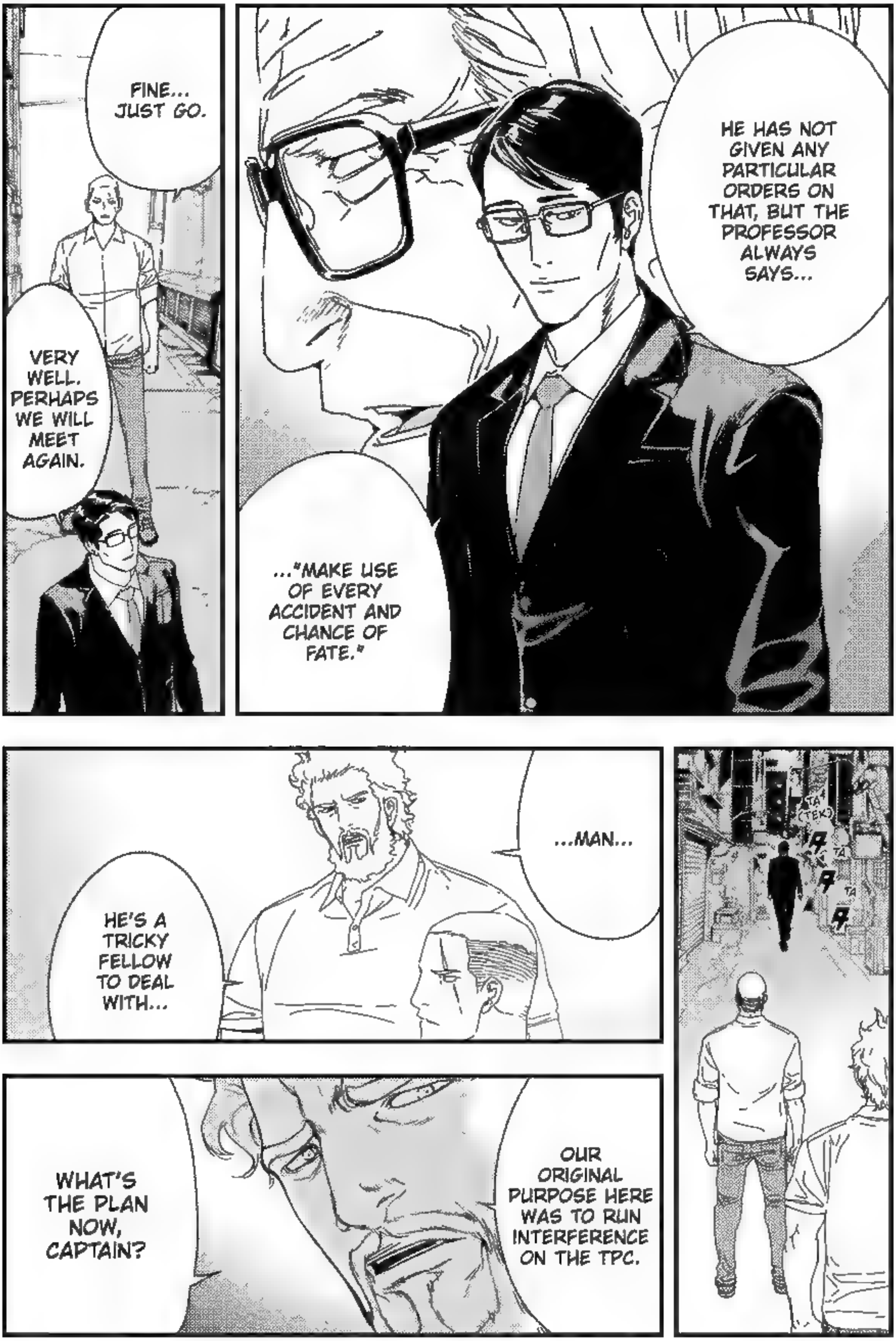

VERY WELL, D.A., I WILL BE DIRECT WITH YOU.
WHAT SORT OF MISSION ARE YOU ON?
I COULD TELL YOU THAT...
...BUT TO BE HONEST, I DON'T KNOW THE FULL DETAILS.
WHAT, YOU THINK THIS IS A JOKE?
NO, IT'S NOT...IT MUST BE WISEMAN.
I DOUBT HE'S LYING.
BUT YOU CAN'T TELL ME YOU DON'T KNOW ITS PURPOSE.
I HAD A FEELING YOU WANTED TO KNOW THAT.

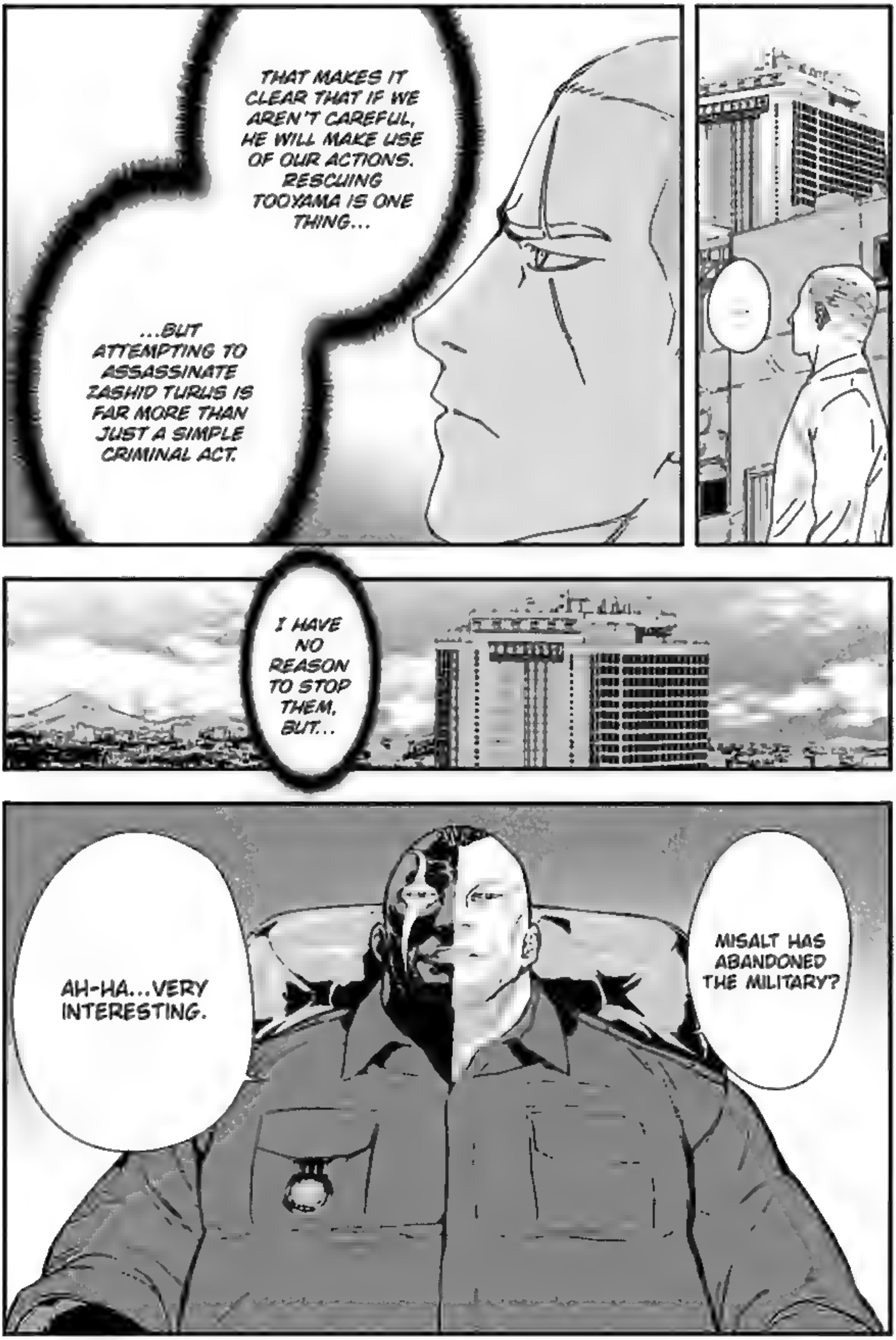

SO WHETHER I TELL YOU OR NOT...
...YOU WILL BE INTERFERING WITH MY WORK, I TAKE IT?
IN THIS CASE, IT MERELY DEPENDS ON THE SCALE OF YOUR CRIME.
...
THE ASSASSINATION OF ZASHID TURUS.
!?

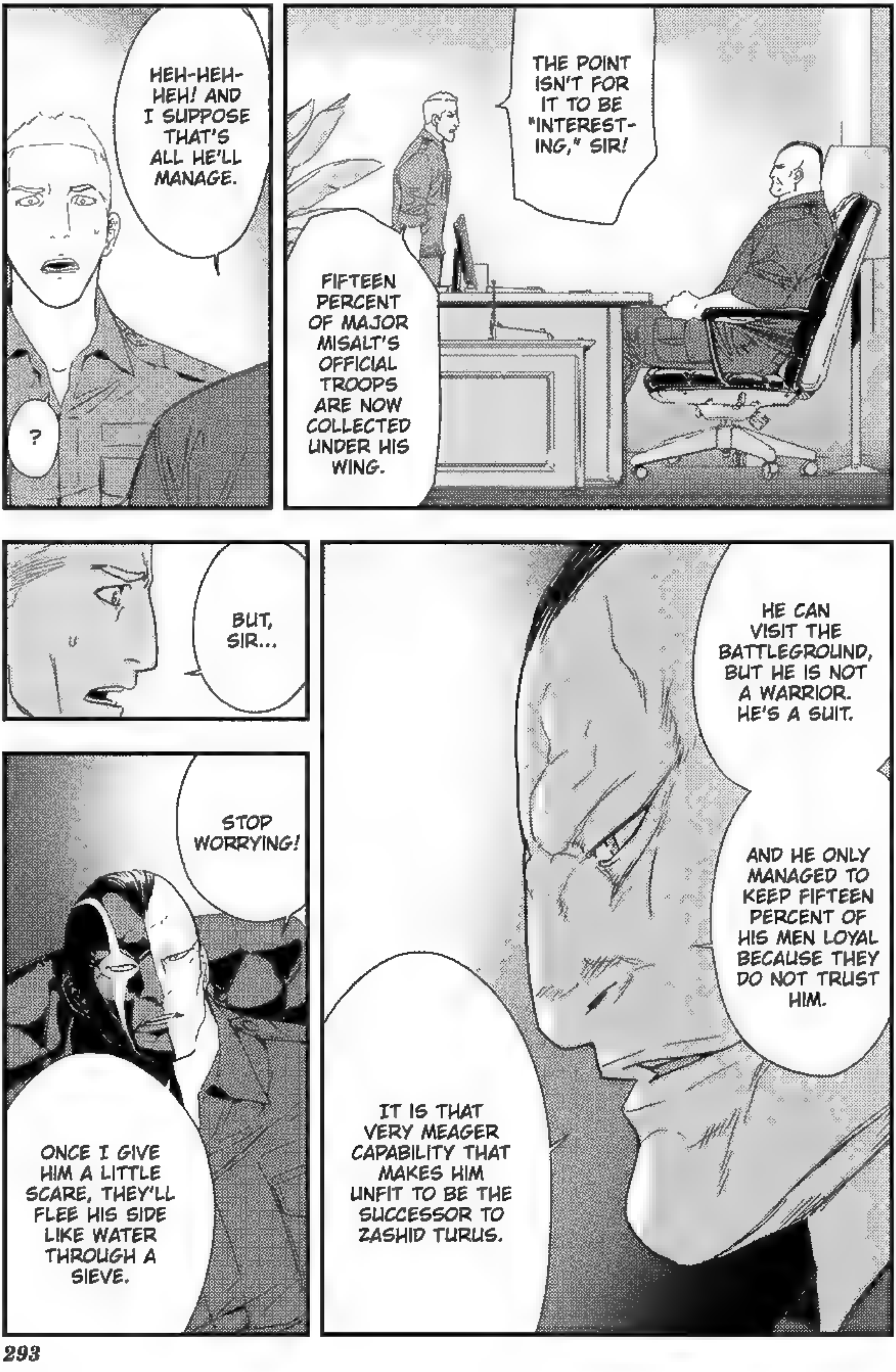

OH, YOU WEREN'T AWARE?
THEN THAT WOULD EXPLAIN YOUR REACTION.
AMONG THOSE WITH EXPERTISE ON SUCH MATTERS IN THE DARKER CORNERS OF THE WORLD, IT IS SAID THAT KILLING HIM WOULD BE HARDER THAN ASSASSINATING A HEAD OF STATE IN THE DEVELOPED FIRST WORLD.
SO HE'S DECIDED HE WANTS A GOOD CHALLENGE, THEN?
IT SEEMS SO.
SO WHAT DO YOU SAY?
I CAN'T GO HAVING YOU CAPTURE ME WHILE I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF AN OPERATION.
I CAN TELL YOU SOME VERY CURRENT AND USEFUL INFORMATION IF YOU AGREE THAT WE WILL SIMPLY WALK AWAY AND GO OUR SEPARATE WAYS. WELL?

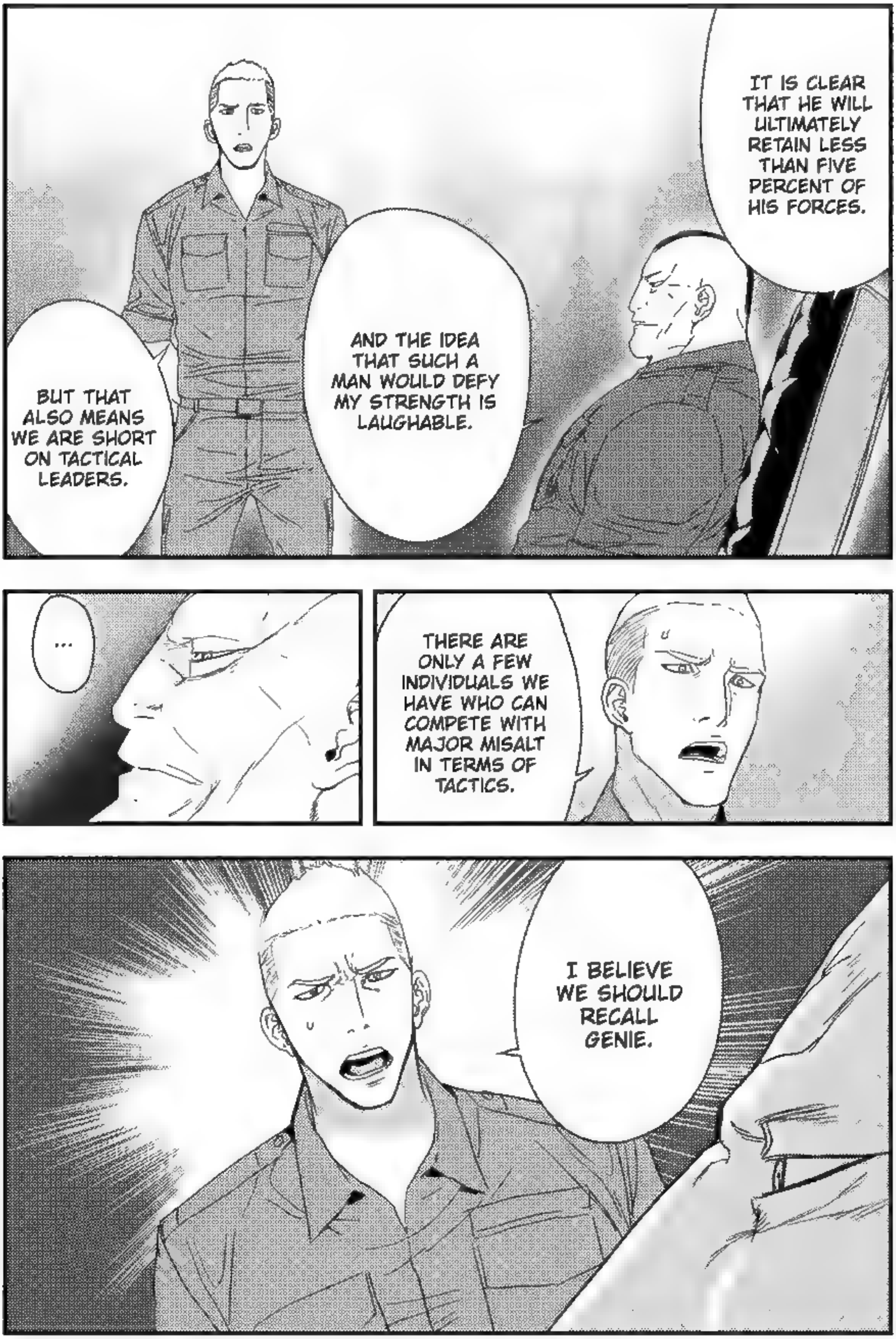

...
ALL RIGHT...
WAIT, REALLY!?
WHEN WE STILL HAVEN'T HEARD WHAT HE'S—
LET'S HEAR IT NOW.
サッ
SA (SWISH)
HARUKA TOOYAMA IS CURRENTLY CONFINED TO THE UNDERGROUND QUARTERS OF THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S ESTATE.

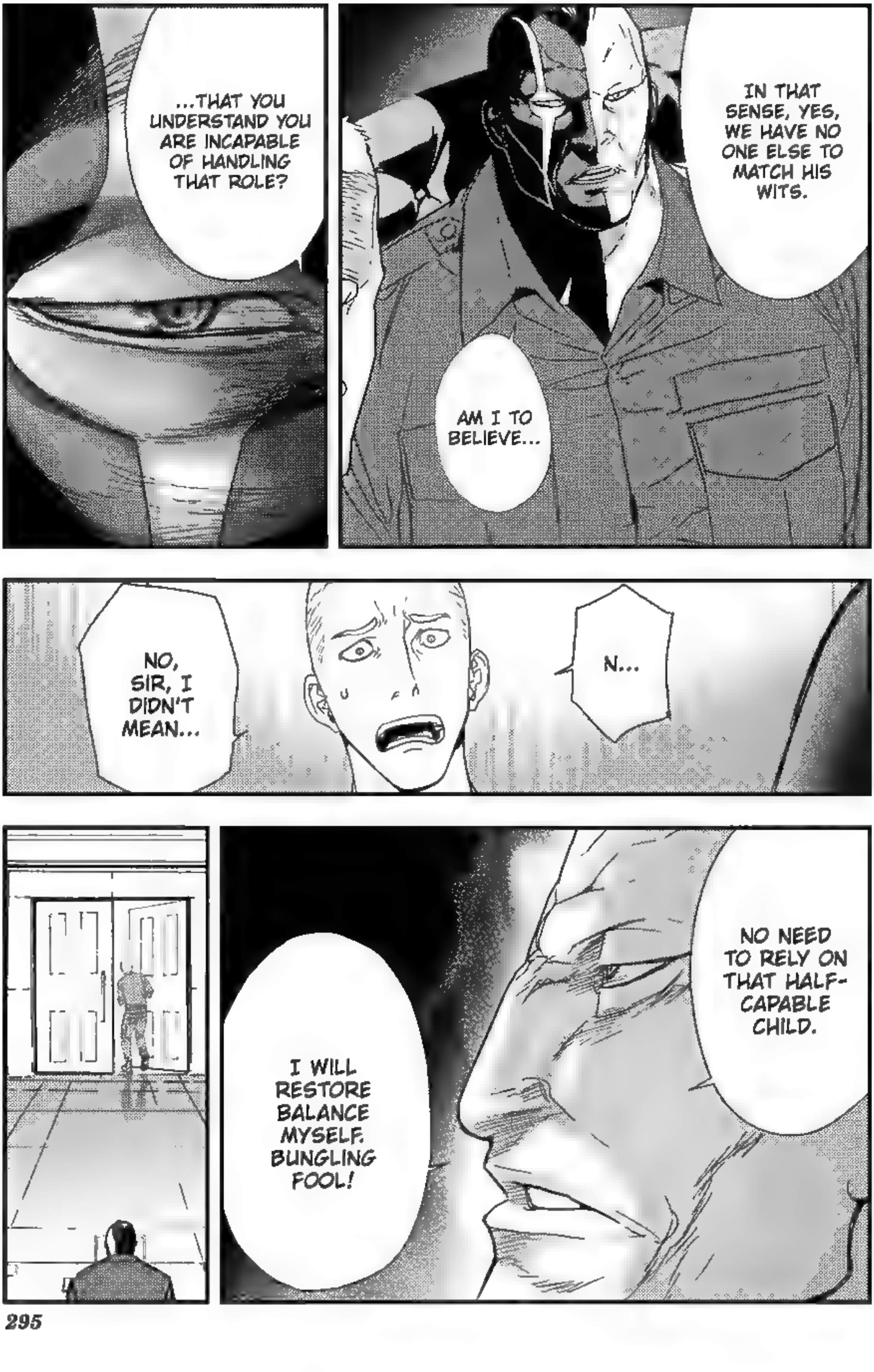

SHE'S WHAT!?
...
NOTHING HAS HAPPENED TO HER YET, PERHAPS BECAUSE HE HASN'T DECIDED WHAT TO DO WITH HER.
BUT THAT IS ONLY FOR THE MOMENT AND CERTAIN TO CHANGE.
IF YOU WISH TO EXTEND AN ALTRUISTIC HAND OF RESCUE, THE SOONER THE BETTER.
I'VE GOT TO CONTACT JULIET'S TEAM ASAP...
...TO HEAR MORE DETAILS...
IS THAT SUFFICIENT?
クル…
KURU (SPIN)
WAS GIVING ME THAT INFORMATION PART OF WISEMAN'S PLAN?

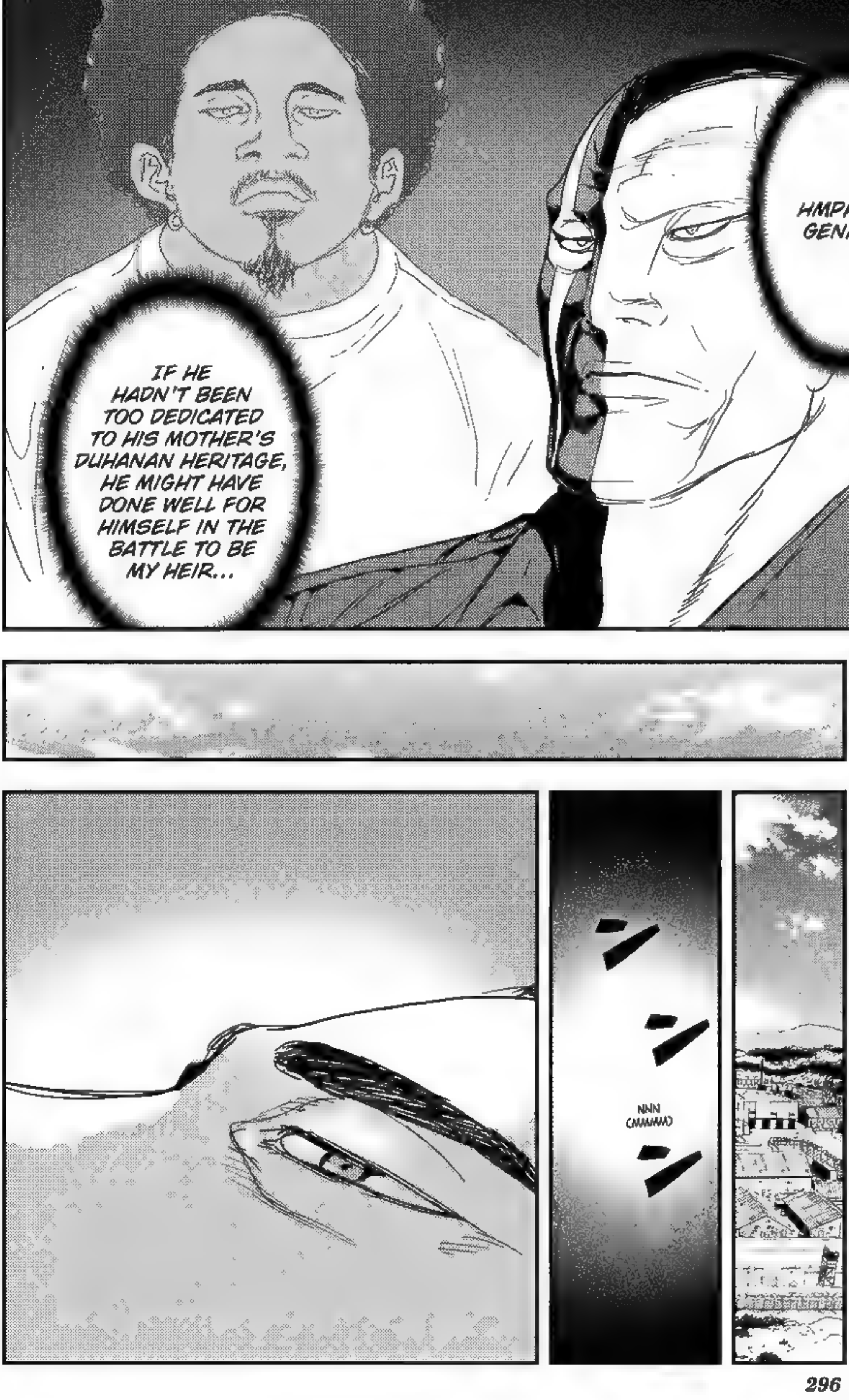

HE HAS NOT GIVEN ANY PARTICULAR ORDERS ON THAT, BUT THE PROFESSOR ALWAYS SAYS...
..."MAKE USE OF EVERY ACCIDENT AND CHANCE OF FATE."
FINE... JUST GO.
VERY WELL. PERHAPS WE WILL MEET AGAIN.
TA (TEK)
TA
TA
...MAN...
HE'S A TRICKY FELLOW TO DEAL WITH...
OUR ORIGINAL PURPOSE HERE WAS TO RUN INTERFERENCE ON THE TPC.
WHAT'S THE PLAN NOW, CAPTAIN?

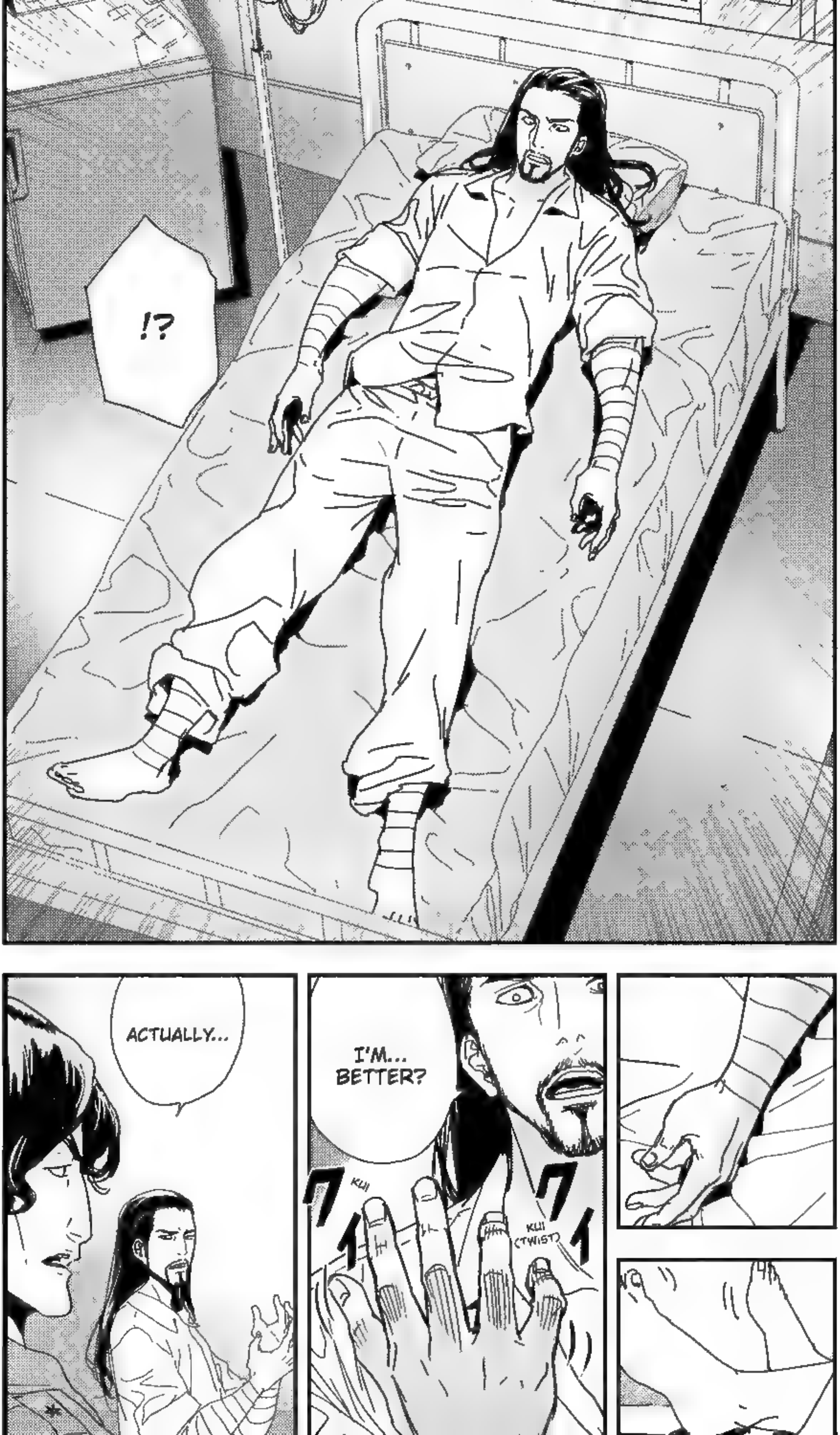

THAT MAKES IT CLEAR THAT IF WE AREN'T CAREFUL, HE WILL MAKE USE OF OUR ACTIONS. RESCUING TOOYAMA IS ONE THING...
...BUT ATTEMPTING TO ASSASSINATE ZASHID TURUS IS FAR MORE THAN JUST A SIMPLE CRIMINAL ACT.
I HAVE NO REASON TO STOP THEM, BUT...
MISALT HAS ABANDONED THE MILITARY?
AH-HA...VERY INTERESTING.

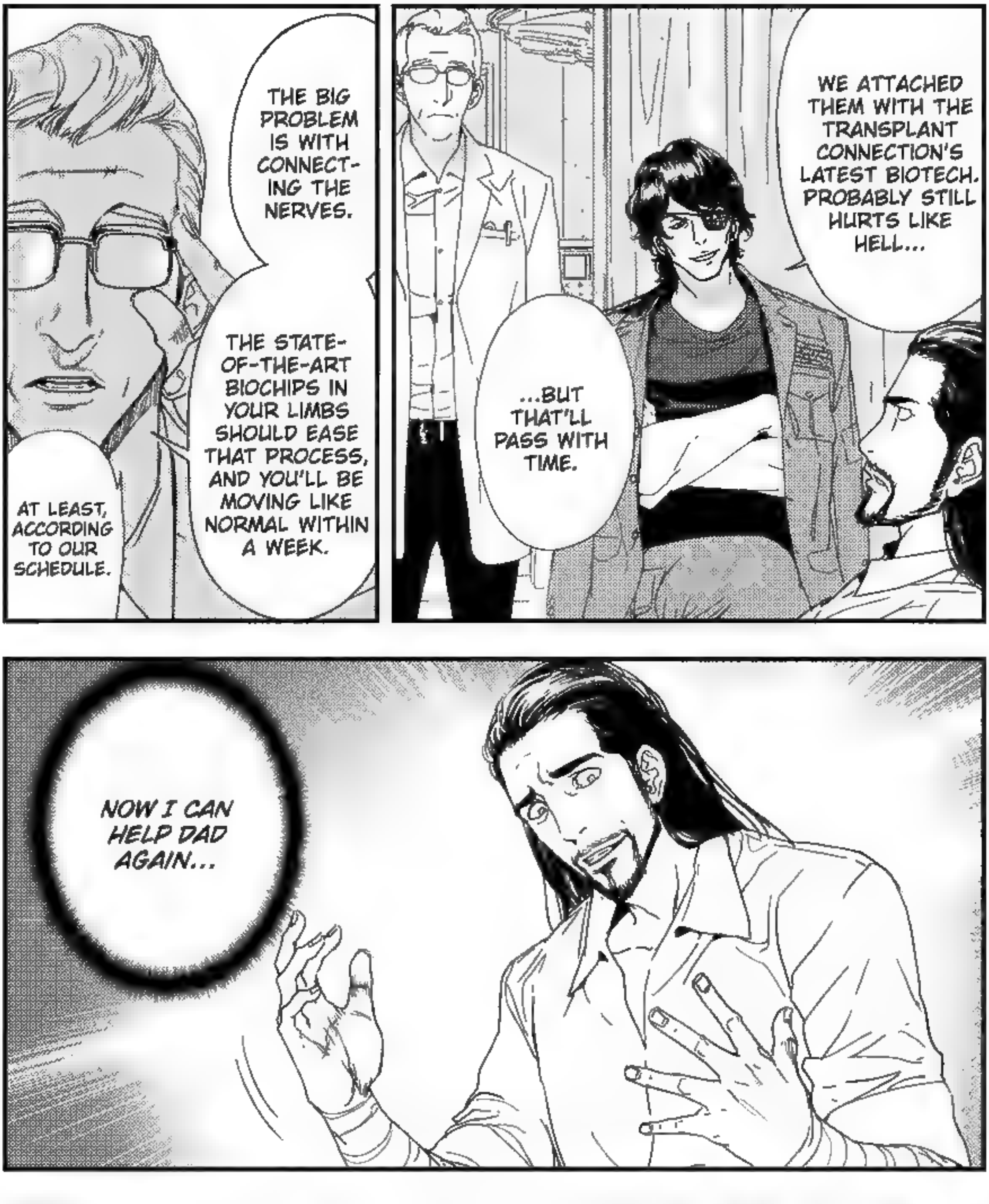

THE POINT ISN'T FOR IT TO BE "INTERESTING," SIR!
FIFTEEN PERCENT OF MAJOR MISALT'S OFFICIAL TROOPS ARE NOW COLLECTED UNDER HIS WING.
HEH-HEH-HEH! AND I SUPPOSE THAT'S ALL HE'LL MANAGE.
?
HE CAN VISIT THE BATTLEGROUND, BUT HE IS NOT A WARRIOR. HE'S A SUIT.
AND HE ONLY MANAGED TO KEEP FIFTEEN PERCENT OF HIS MEN LOYAL BECAUSE THEY DO NOT TRUST HIM.
IT IS THAT VERY MEAGER CAPABILITY THAT MAKES HIM UNFIT TO BE THE SUCCESSOR TO ZASHID TURUS.
BUT, SIR...
STOP WORRYING!
ONCE I GIVE HIM A LITTLE SCARE, THEY'LL FLEE HIS SIDE LIKE WATER THROUGH A SIEVE.

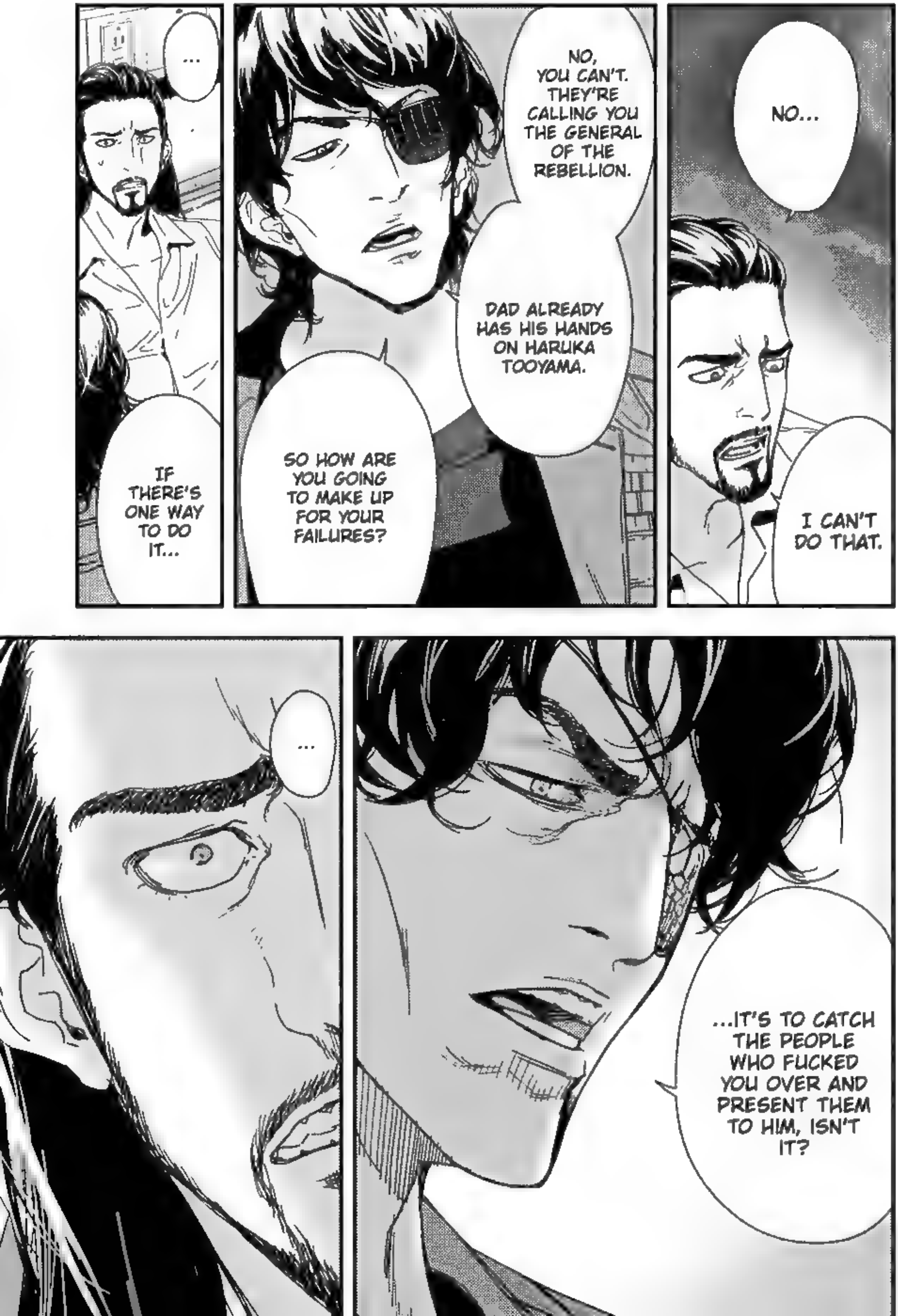

IT IS CLEAR THAT HE WILL ULTIMATELY RETAIN LESS THAN FIVE PERCENT OF HIS FORCES.
AND THE IDEA THAT SUCH A MAN WOULD DEFY MY STRENGTH IS LAUGHABLE.
BUT THAT ALSO MEANS WE ARE SHORT ON TACTICAL LEADERS.
THERE ARE ONLY A FEW INDIVIDUALS WE HAVE WHO CAN COMPETE WITH MAJOR MISALT IN TERMS OF TACTICS.
...
I BELIEVE WE SHOULD RECALL GENIE.

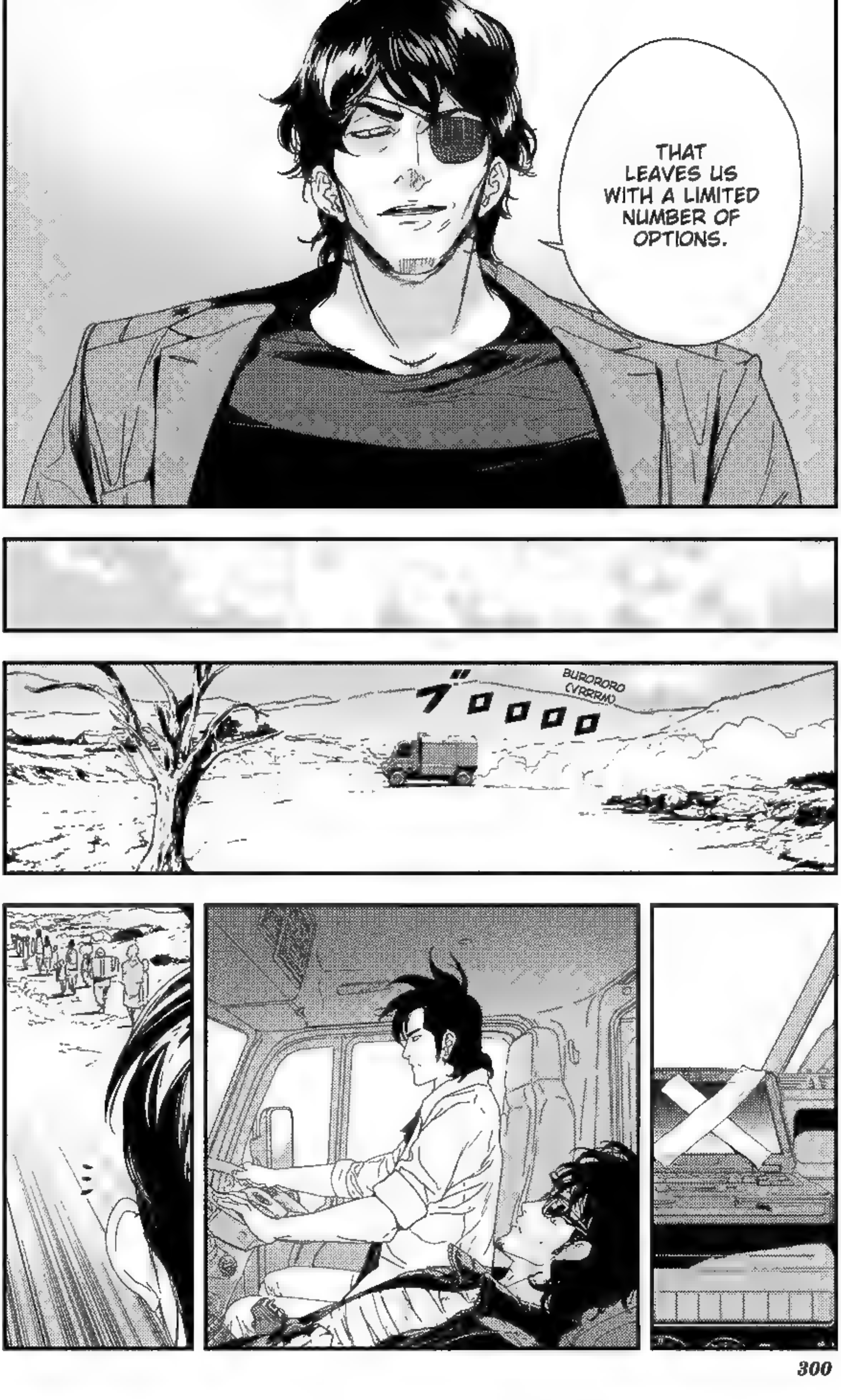

IN THAT SENSE, YES, WE HAVE NO ONE ELSE TO MATCH HIS WITS.
AM I TO BELIEVE...
...THAT YOU UNDERSTAND YOU ARE INCAPABLE OF HANDLING THAT ROLE?
N...
NO, SIR, I DIDN'T MEAN...
NO NEED TO RELY ON THAT HALF-CAPABLE CHILD.
I WILL RESTORE BALANCE MYSELF. BUNGLING FOOL!

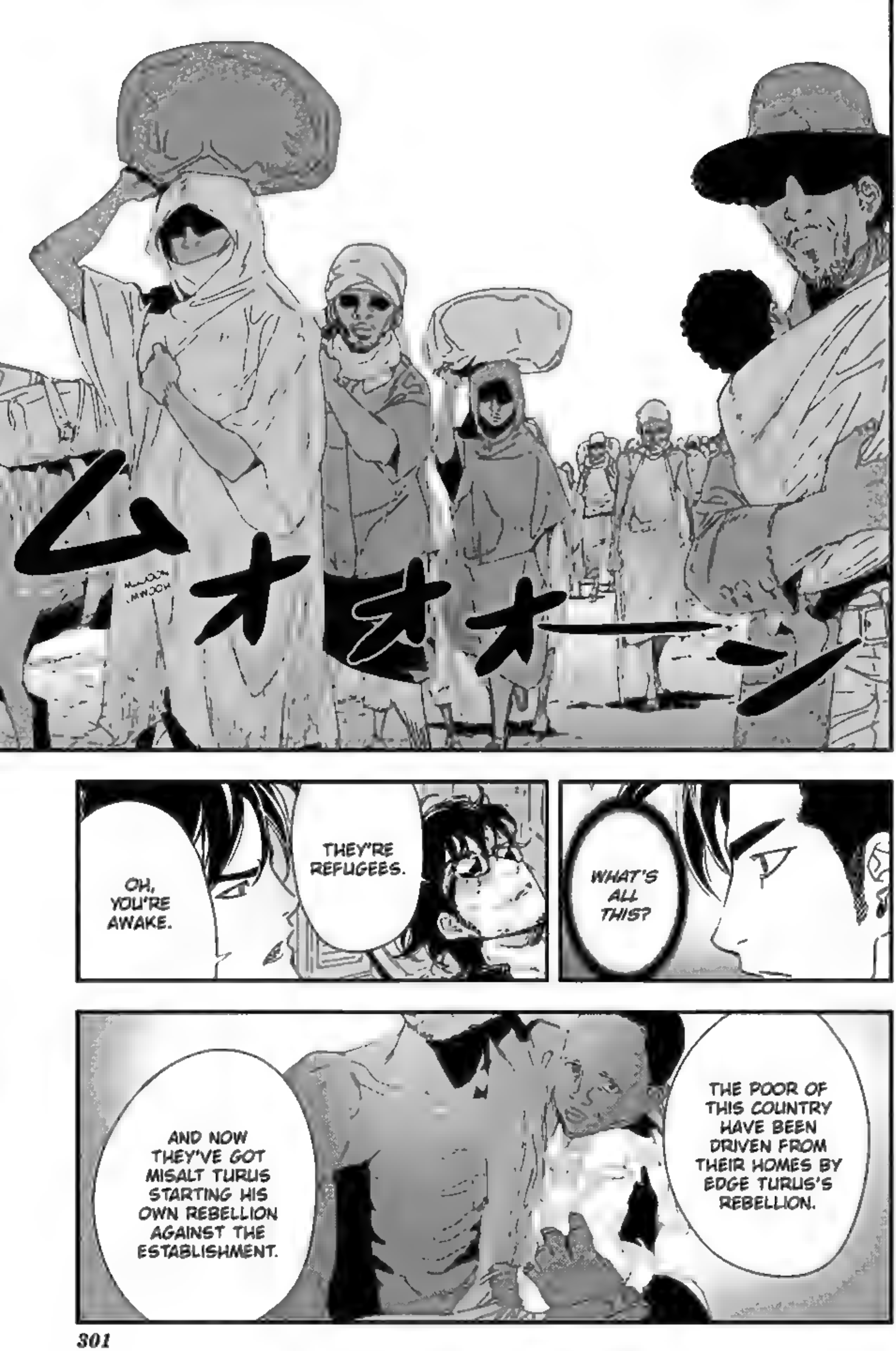

HMPH... GENIE?
IF HE HADN'T BEEN TOO DEDICATED TO HIS MOTHER'S DUHANAN HERITAGE, HE MIGHT HAVE DONE WELL FOR HIMSELF IN THE BATTLE TO BE MY HEIR...
NNN (MMMM)

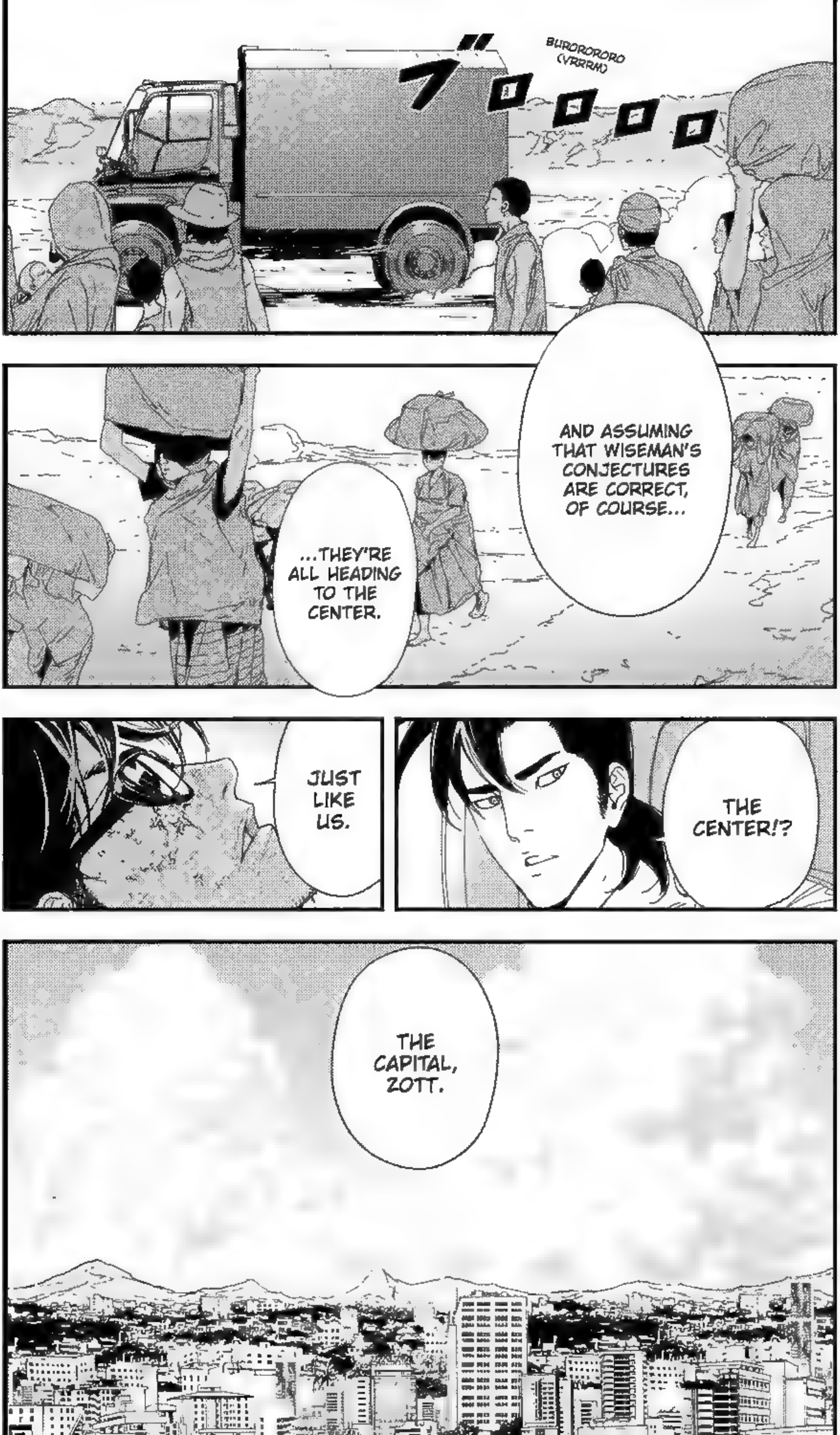

!?
I'M... BETTER?
KUI
KUI (TWIST)
ACTUALLY...

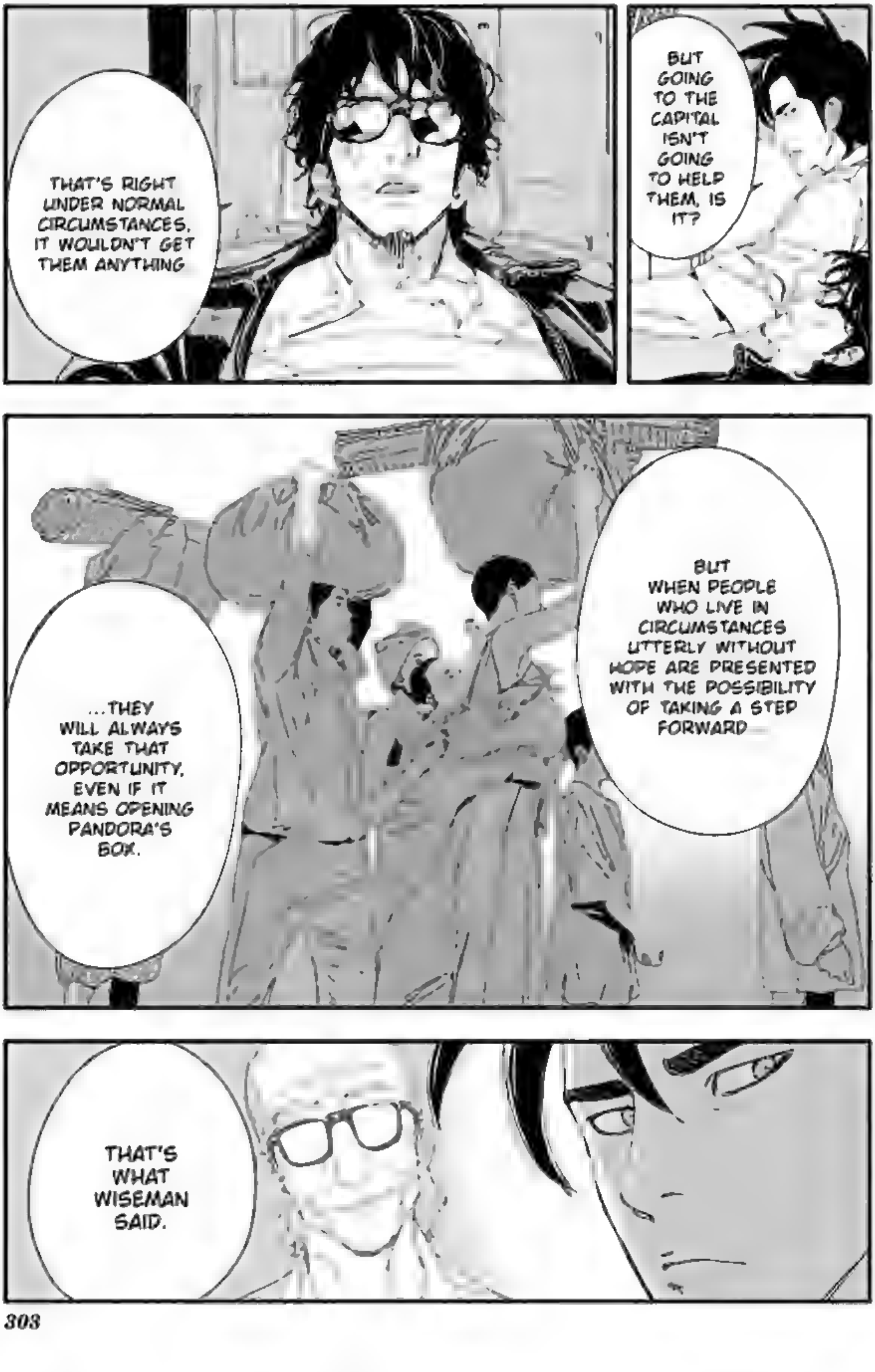

WE ATTACHED THEM WITH THE TRANSPLANT CONNECTION'S LATEST BIOTECH. PROBABLY STILL HURTS LIKE HELL...
...BUT THAT'LL PASS WITH TIME.
THE BIG PROBLEM IS WITH CONNECTING THE NERVES.
THE STATE-OF-THE-ART BIOCHIPS IN YOUR LIMBS SHOULD EASE THAT PROCESS, AND YOU'LL BE MOVING LIKE NORMAL WITHIN A WEEK.
AT LEAST, ACCORDING TO OUR SCHEDULE.
NOW I CAN HELP DAD AGAIN...
HMPH...
SO WHAT'S THE PLAN?
YOU'RE NOT JUST GONNA RUN AND GROVEL TO DAD, ARE YOU?

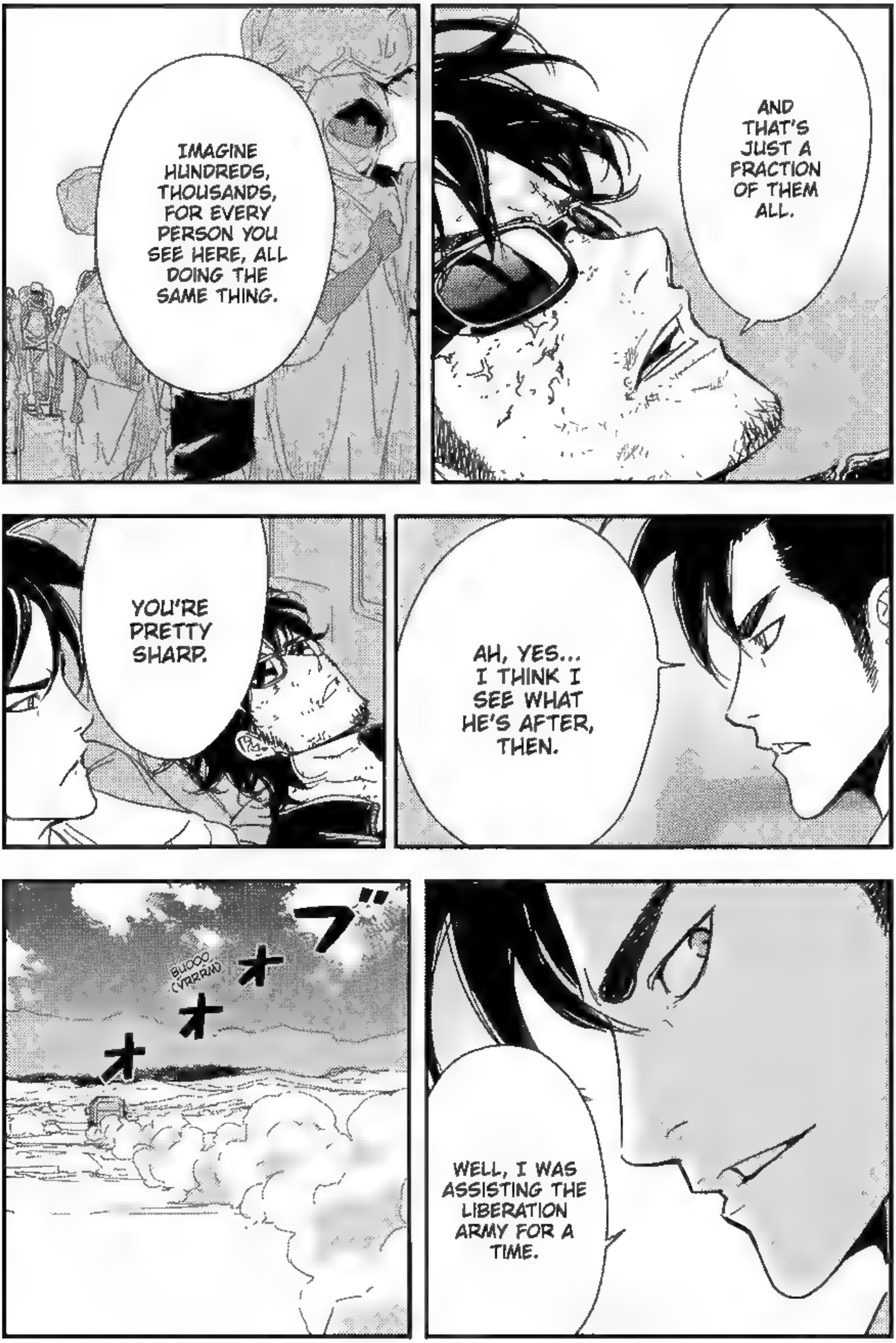

NO...
I CAN'T DO THAT.
NO, YOU CAN'T. THEY'RE CALLING YOU THE GENERAL OF THE REBELLION.
DAD ALREADY HAS HIS HANDS ON HARUKA TOOYAMA.
SO HOW ARE YOU GOING TO MAKE UP FOR YOUR FAILURES?
...
IF THERE'S ONE WAY TO DO IT...
...IT'S TO CATCH THE PEOPLE WHO FUCKED YOU OVER AND PRESENT THEM TO HIM, ISN'T IT?
...

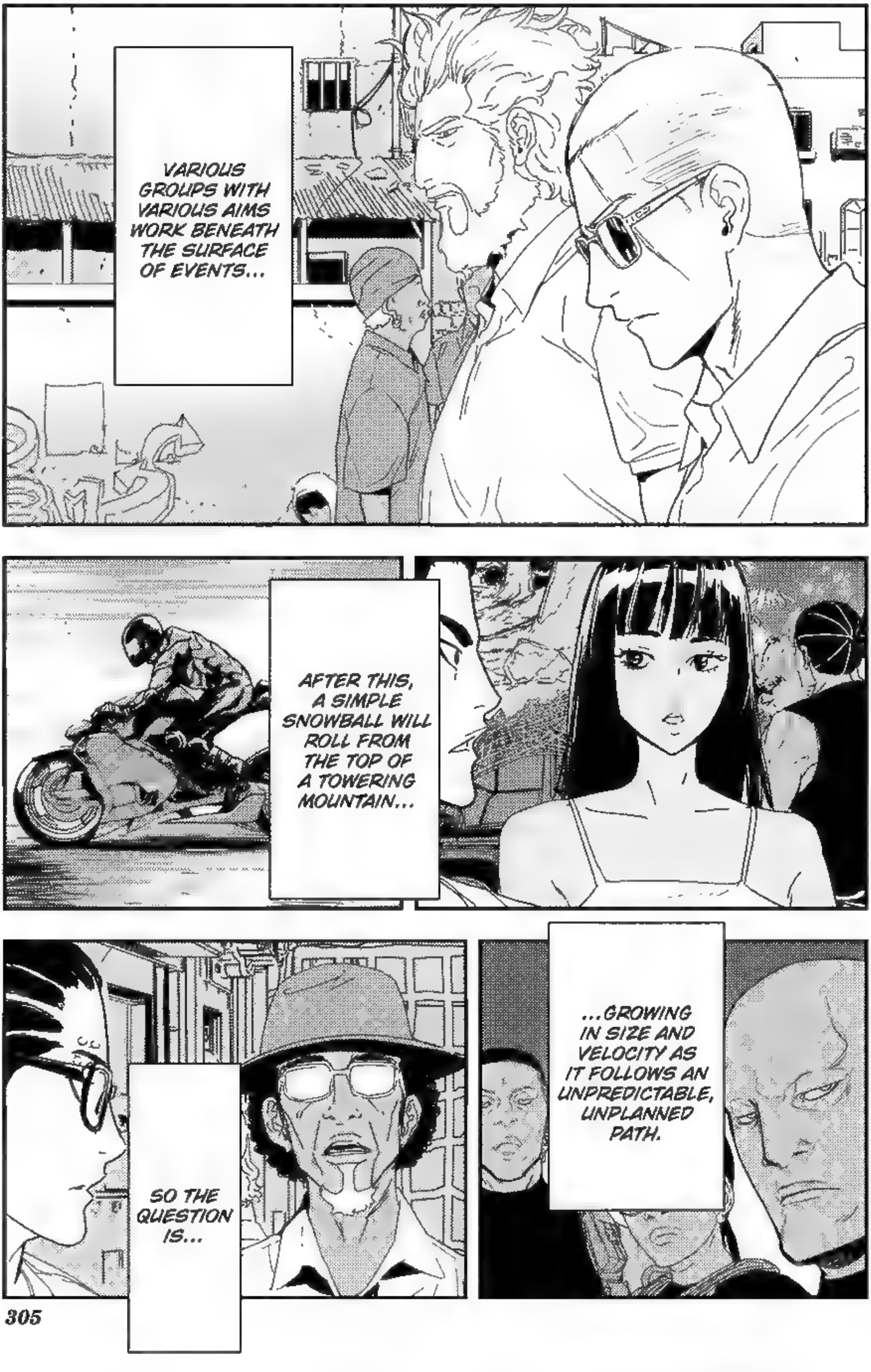

THAT LEAVES US WITH A LIMITED NUMBER OF OPTIONS.
ブロロロロ
BURORORO (VRRRM)

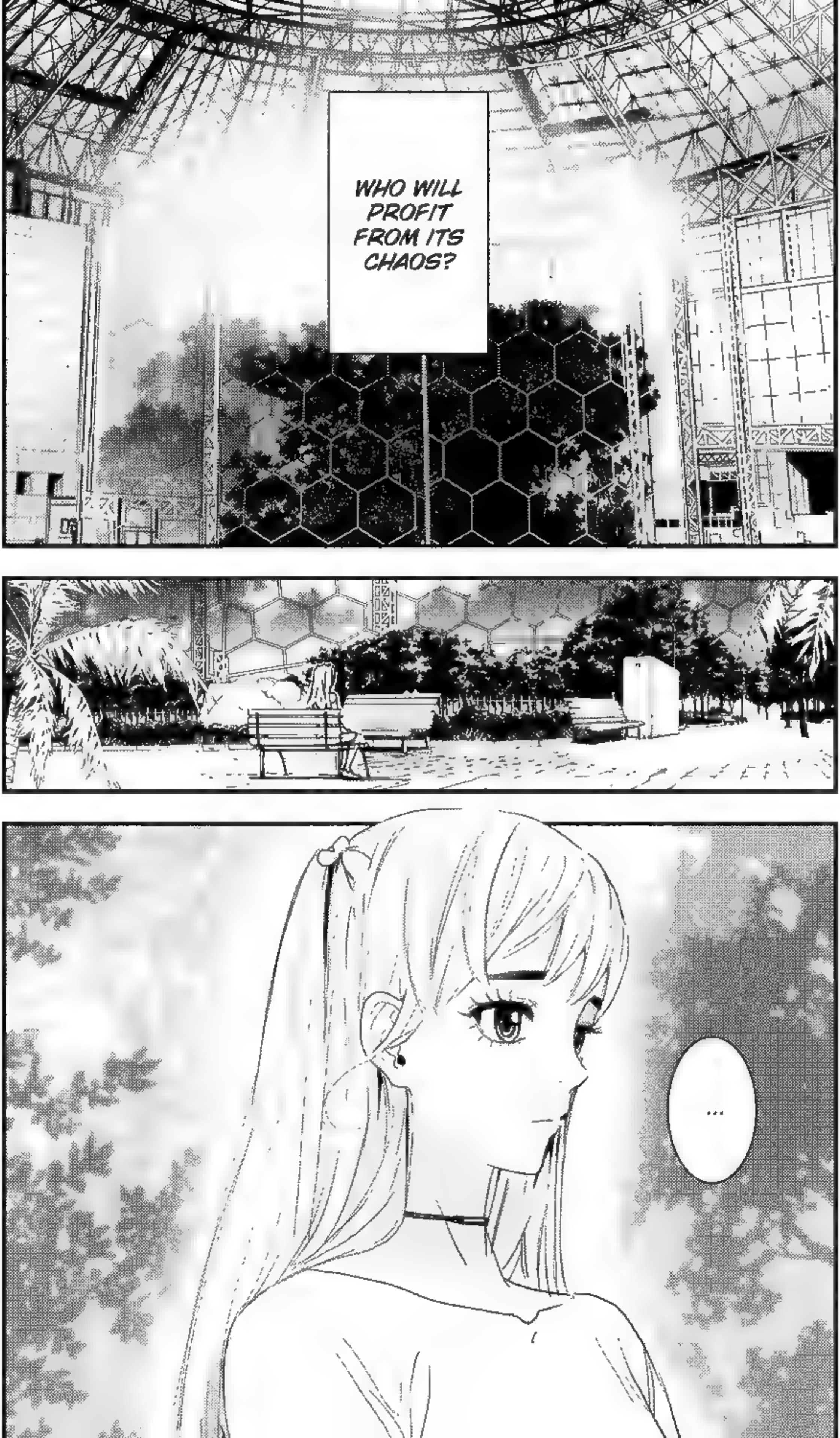

ムオオオーン
MWOOON
OH, YOU'RE AWAKE.
THEY'RE REFUGEES.
WHAT'S ALL THIS?
THE POOR OF THIS COUNTRY HAVE BEEN DRIVEN FROM THEIR HOMES BY EDGE TURUS'S REBELLION.
AND NOW THEY'VE GOT MISALT TURUS STARTING HIS OWN REBELLION AGAINST THE ESTABLISHMENT.


ブロロロロ
BURORORORO (VRRRM)
AND ASSUMING THAT WISEMAN'S CONJECTURES ARE CORRECT, OF COURSE...
...THEY'RE ALL HEADING TO THE CENTER.
THE CENTER!?
JUST LIKE US.
THE CAPITAL, ZOTT.


BUT GOING TO THE CAPITAL ISN'T GOING TO HELP THEM, IS IT?
THAT'S RIGHT UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES, IT WOULDN'T GET THEM ANYTHING
BUT WHEN PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN CIRCUMSTANCES UTTERLY WITHOUT HOPE ARE PRESENTED WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF TAKING A STEP FORWARD...
...THEY WILL ALWAYS TAKE THAT OPPORTUNITY, EVEN IF IT MEANS OPENING PANDORA'S BOX.
THAT'S WHAT WISEMAN SAID.


AND THAT'S JUST A FRACTION OF THEM ALL.
IMAGINE HUNDREDS, THOUSANDS, FOR EVERY PERSON YOU SEE HERE, ALL DOING THE SAME THING.
AH, YES... I THINK I SEE WHAT HE'S AFTER, THEN.
YOU'RE PRETTY SHARP.
WELL, I WAS ASSISTING THE LIBERATION ARMY FOR A TIME.
ブォォォ
BUOOO (VRRRM)


VARIOUS GROUPS WITH VARIOUS AIMS WORK BENEATH THE SURFACE OF EVENTS...
AFTER THIS, A SIMPLE SNOWBALL WILL ROLL FROM THE TOP OF A TOWERING MOUNTAIN...
...GROWING IN SIZE AND VELOCITY AS IT FOLLOWS AN UNPREDICTABLE, UNPLANNED PATH.
SO THE QUESTION IS...


WHO WILL PROFIT FROM ITS CHAOS?
...

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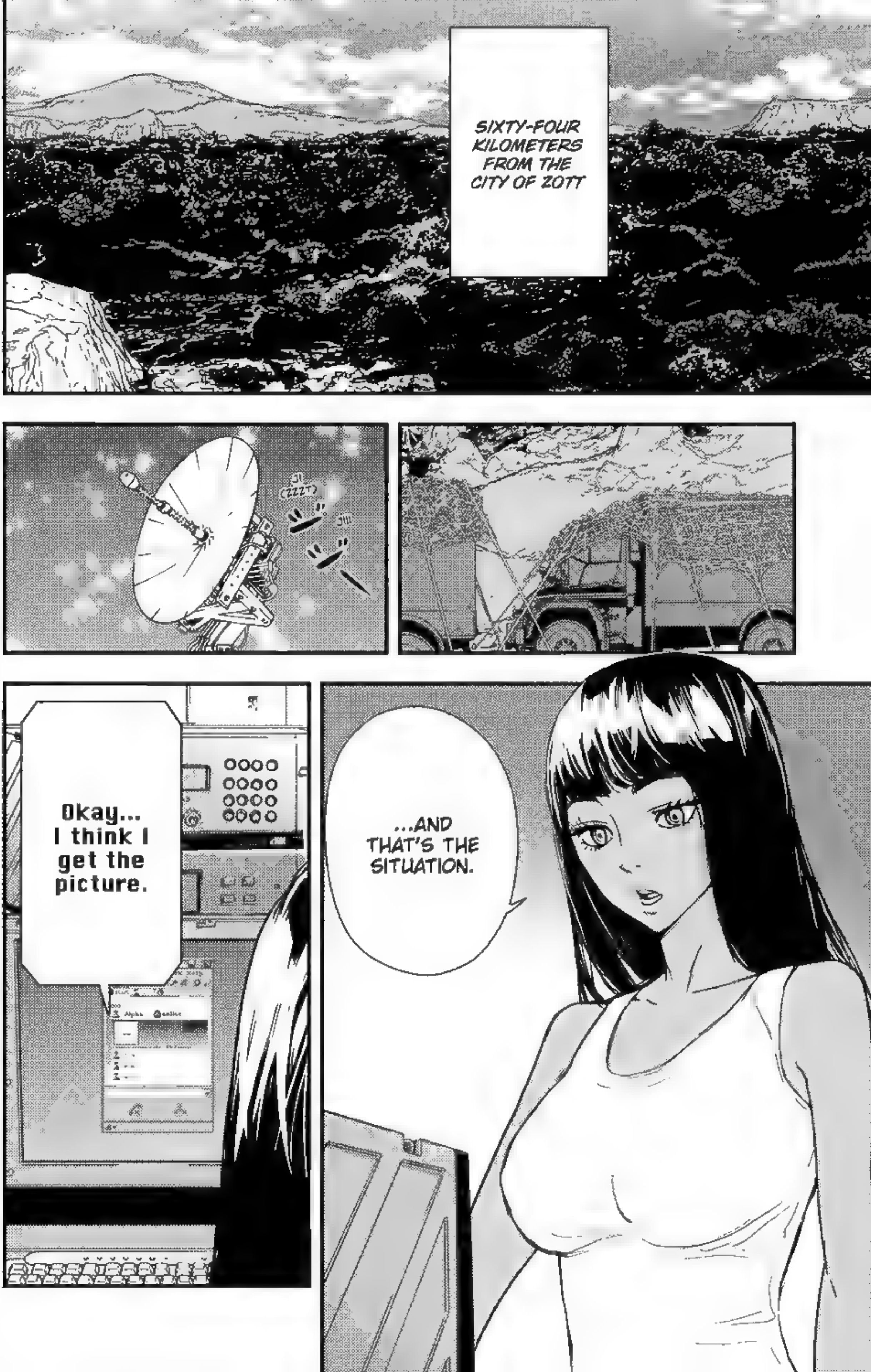
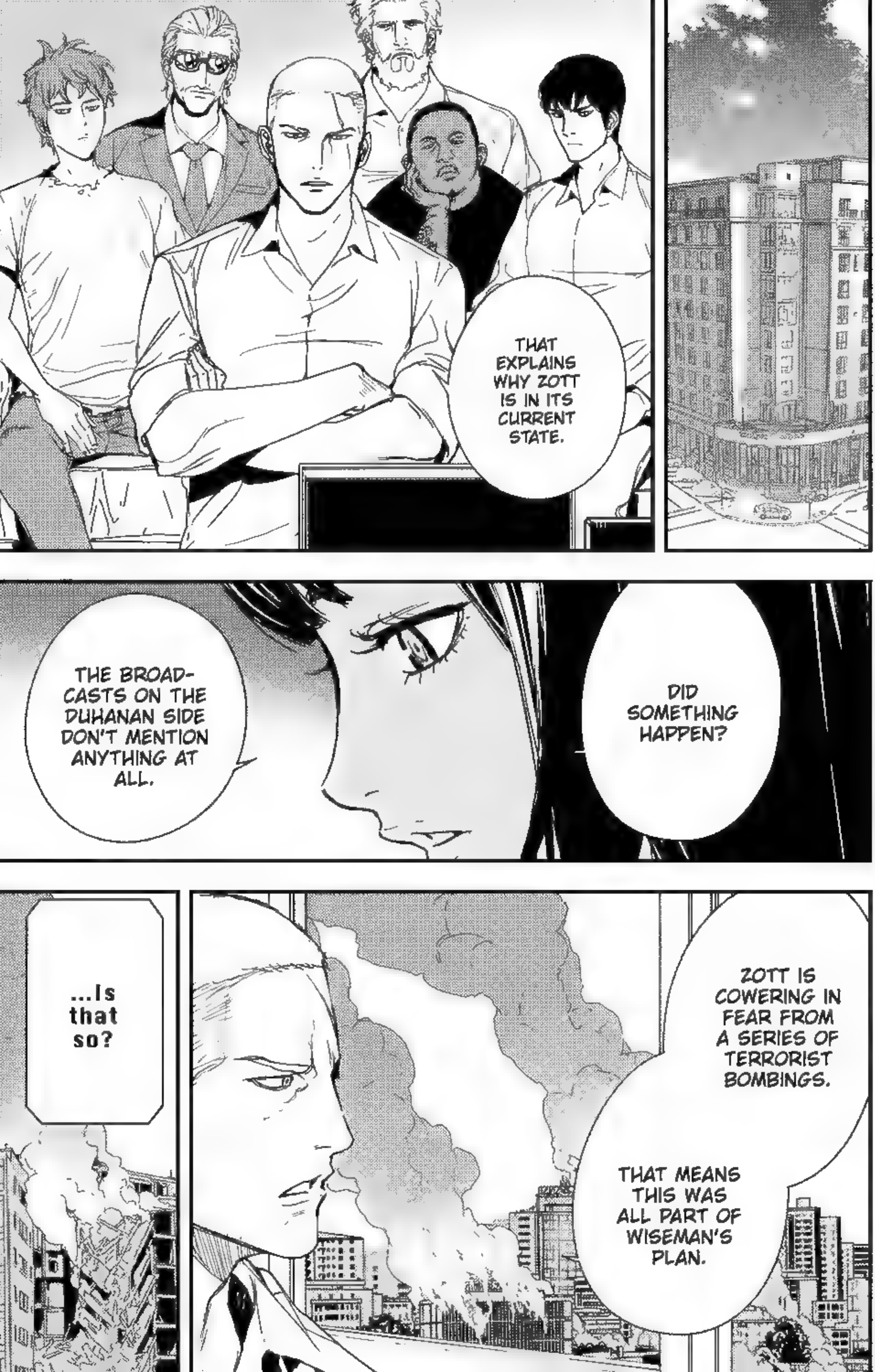
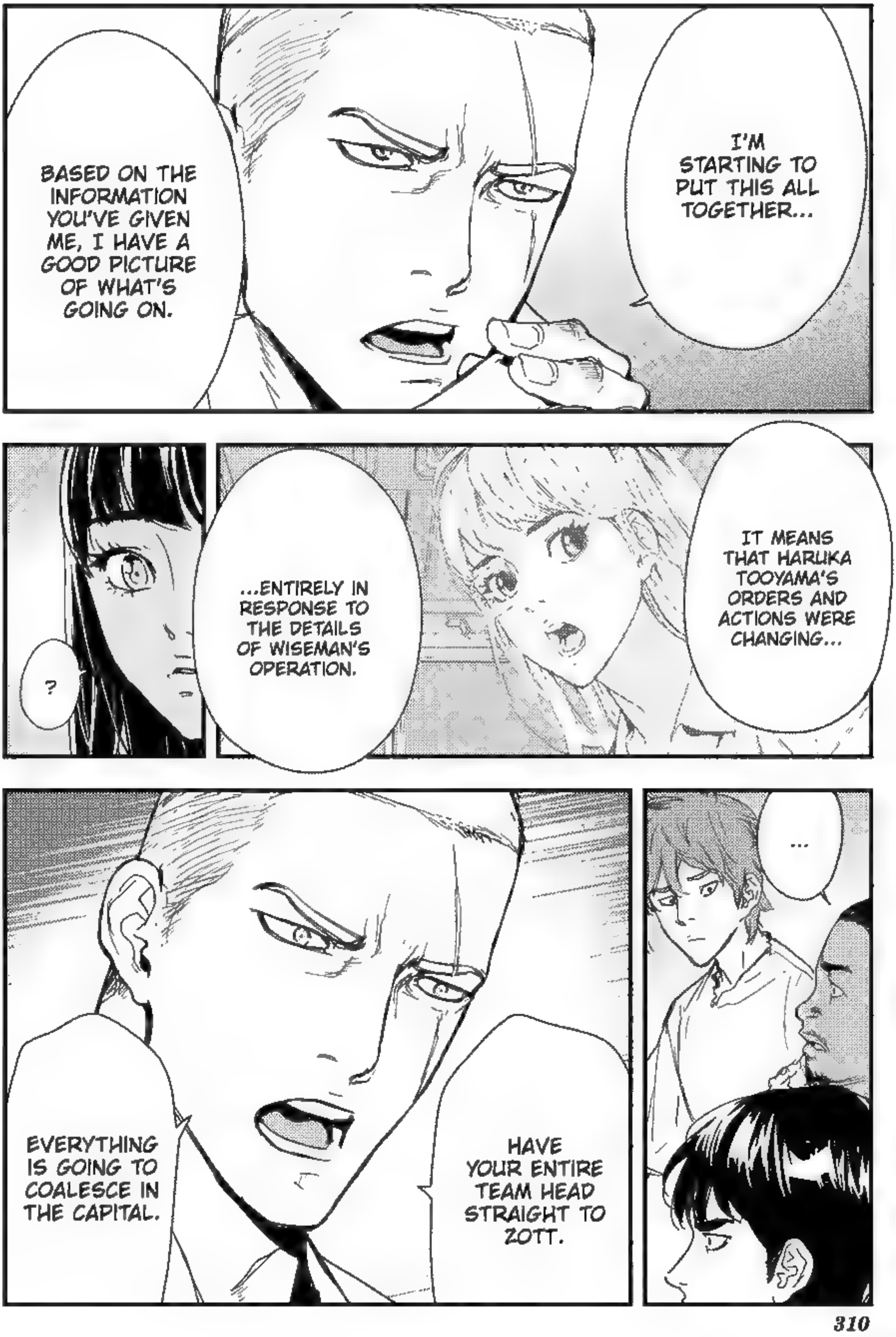
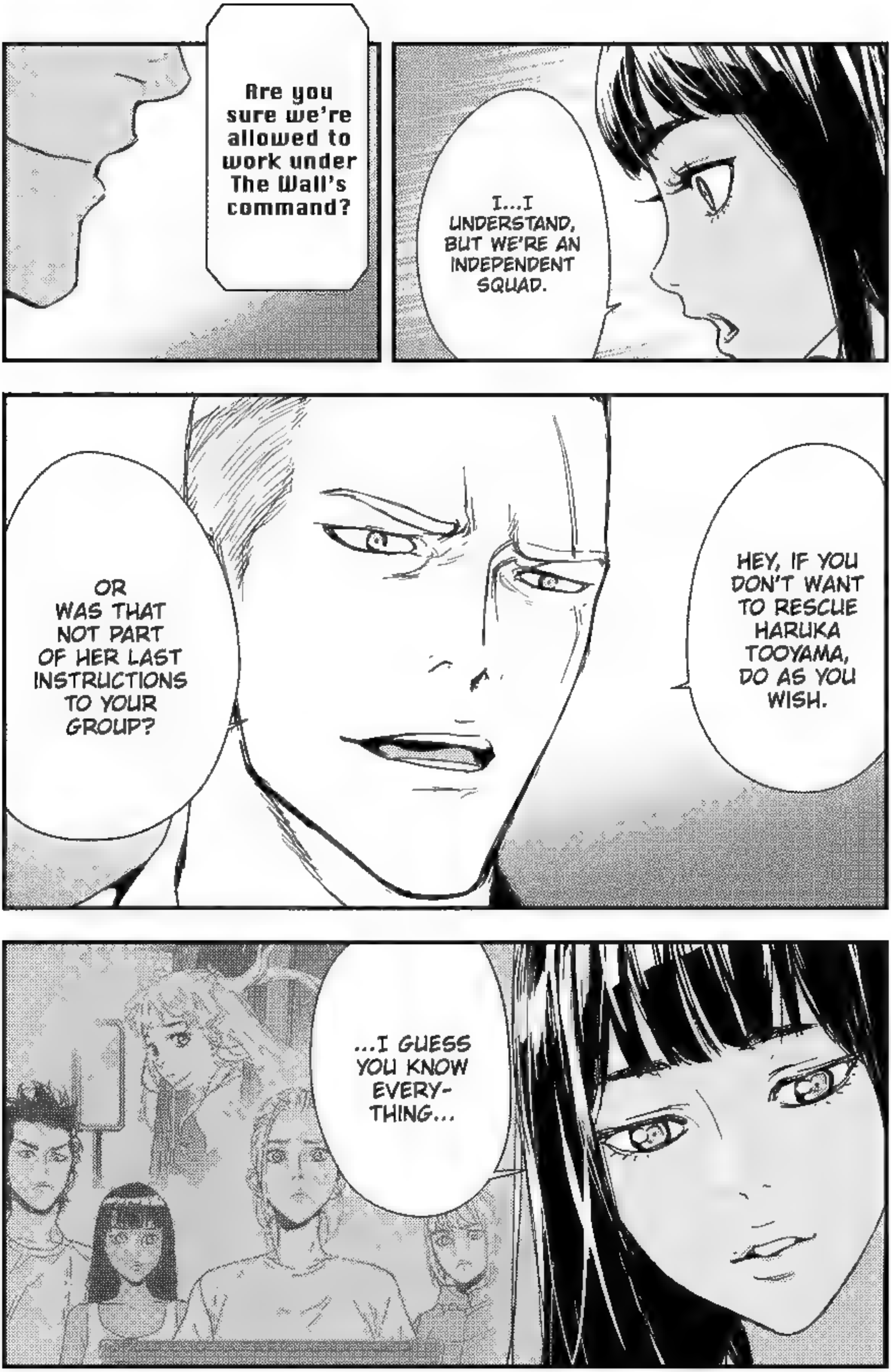
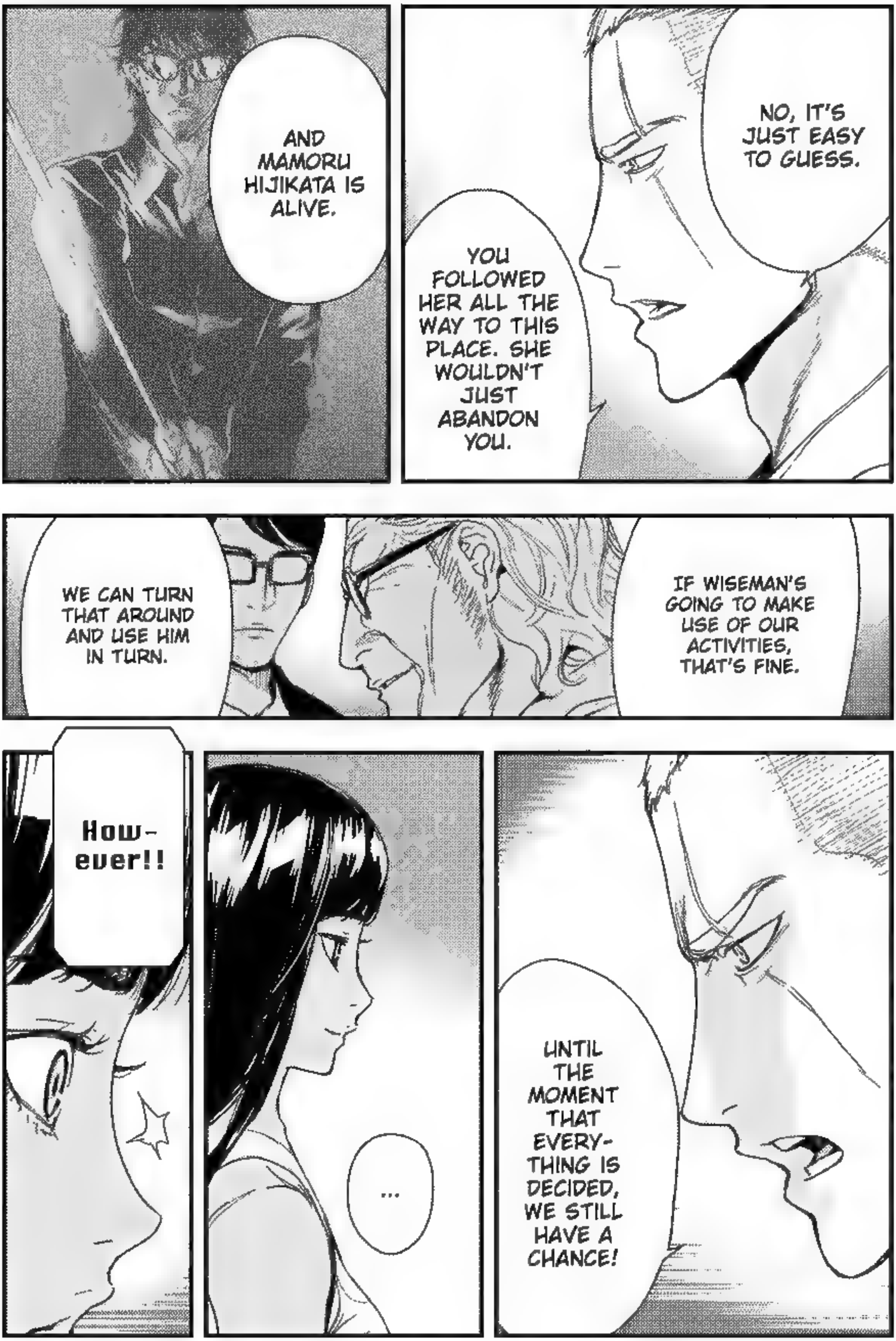
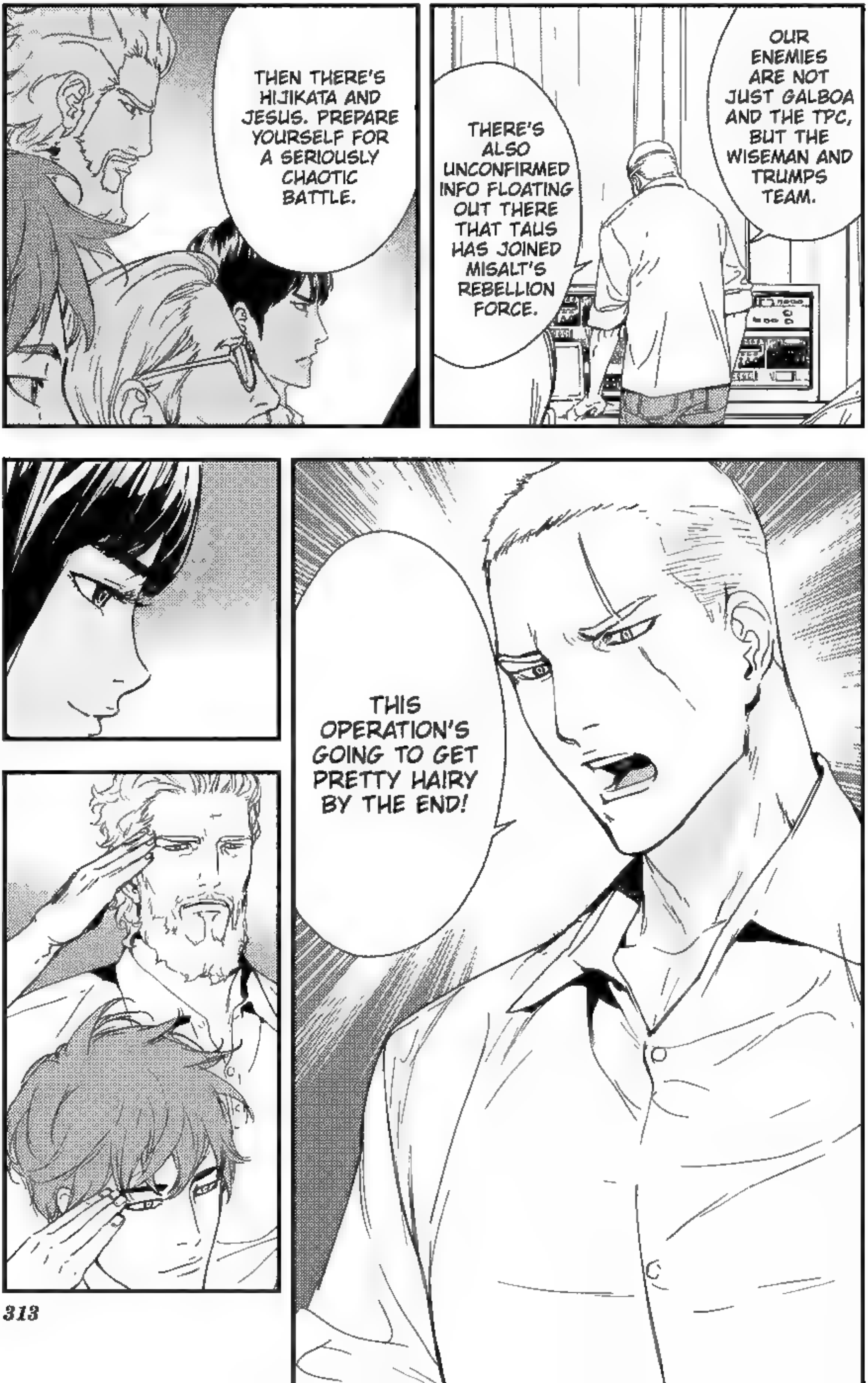

SIXTY-FOUR KILOMETERS FROM THE CITY OF ZOTT
JI (ZZZT)
...AND THAT'S THE SITUATION.
Okay... I think I get the picture.

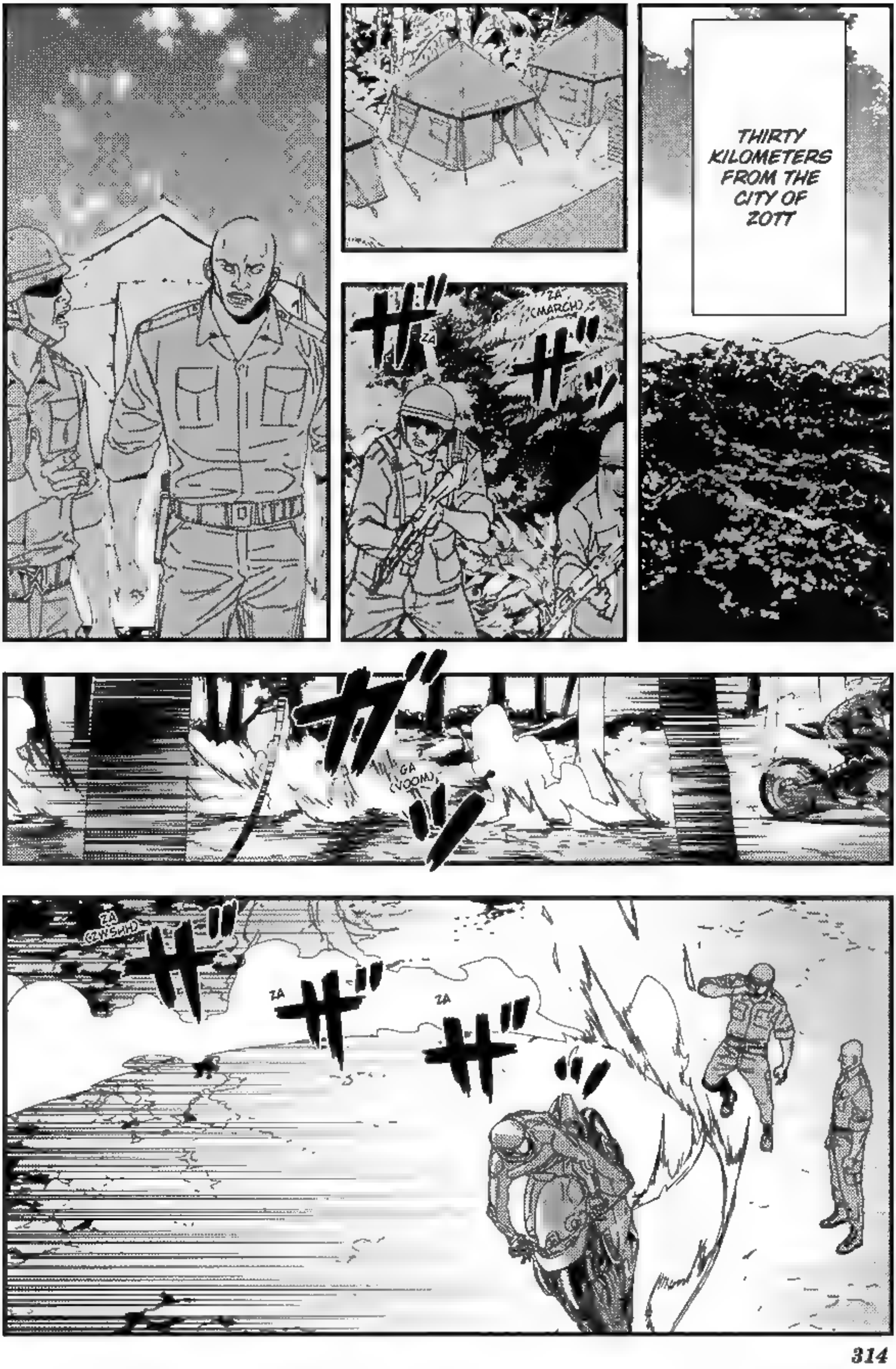

THAT EXPLAINS WHY ZOTT IS IN ITS CURRENT STATE.
DID SOMETHING HAPPEN?
THE BROADCASTS ON THE DUHANAN SIDE DON'T MENTION ANYTHING AT ALL.
ZOTT IS COWERING IN FEAR FROM A SERIES OF TERRORIST BOMBINGS.
THAT MEANS THIS WAS ALL PART OF WISEMAN'S PLAN.
...Is that so?

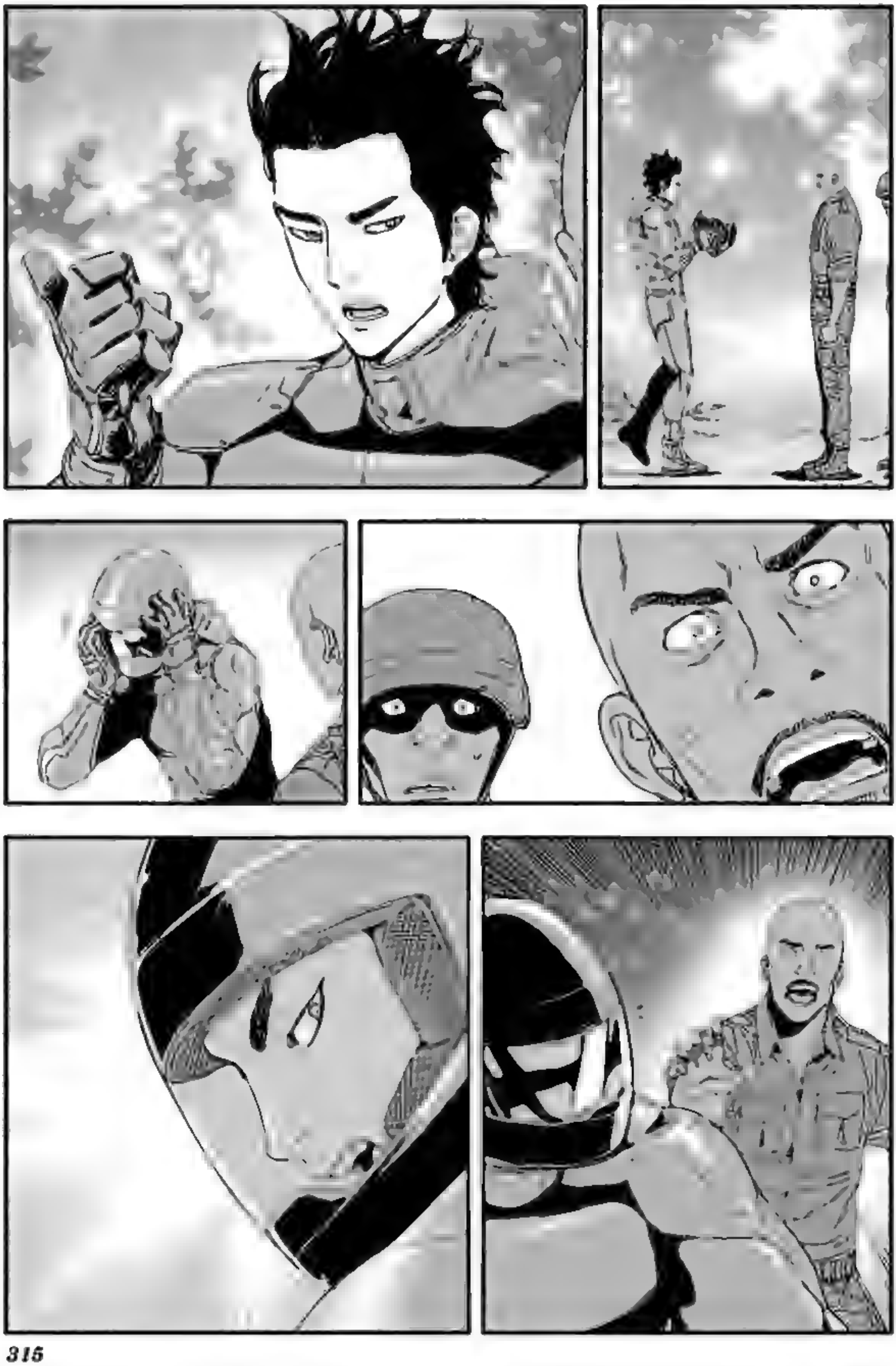

I'M STARTING TO PUT THIS ALL TOGETHER...
BASED ON THE INFORMATION YOU'VE GIVEN ME, I HAVE A GOOD PICTURE OF WHAT'S GOING ON.
IT MEANS THAT HARUKA TOOYAMA'S ORDERS AND ACTIONS WERE CHANGING...
...ENTIRELY IN RESPONSE TO THE DETAILS OF WISEMAN'S OPERATION.
?
...
HAVE YOUR ENTIRE TEAM HEAD STRAIGHT TO ZOTT.
EVERYTHING IS GOING TO COALESCE IN THE CAPITAL.

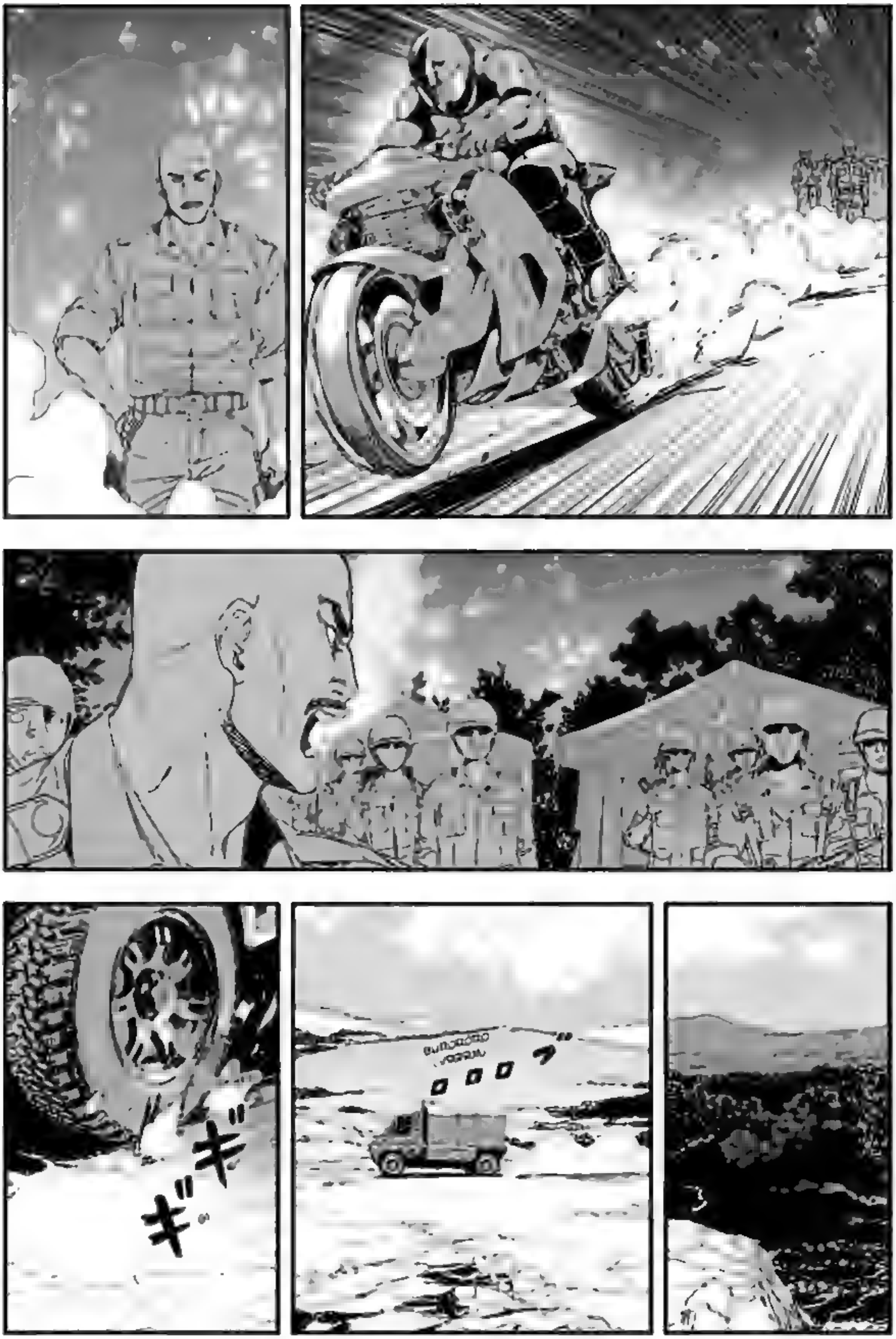

I...I UNDERSTAND, BUT WE'RE AN INDEPENDENT SQUAD.
Are you sure we're allowed to work under The Wall's command?
HEY, IF YOU DON'T WANT TO RESCUE HARUKA TOOYAMA, DO AS YOU WISH.
OR WAS THAT NOT PART OF HER LAST INSTRUCTIONS TO YOUR GROUP?
...I GUESS YOU KNOW EVERYTHING...

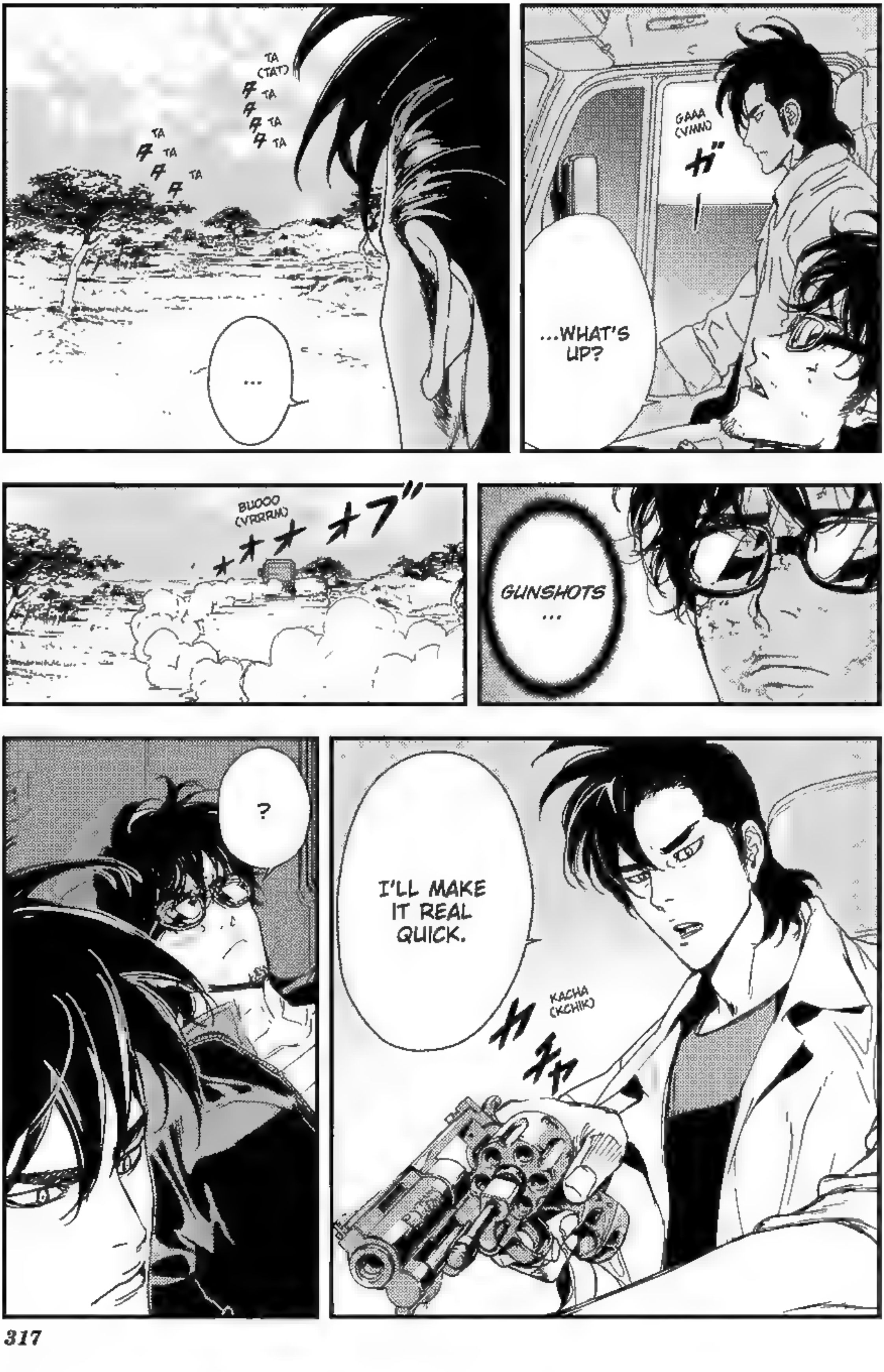

NO, IT'S JUST EASY TO GUESS.
YOU FOLLOWED HER ALL THE WAY TO THIS PLACE. SHE WOULDN'T JUST ABANDON YOU.
AND MAMORU HIJIKATA IS ALIVE.
IF WISEMAN'S GOING TO MAKE USE OF OUR ACTIVITIES, THAT'S FINE.
WE CAN TURN THAT AROUND AND USE HIM IN TURN.
UNTIL THE MOMENT THAT EVERYTHING IS DECIDED, WE STILL HAVE A CHANCE!
...
However!!

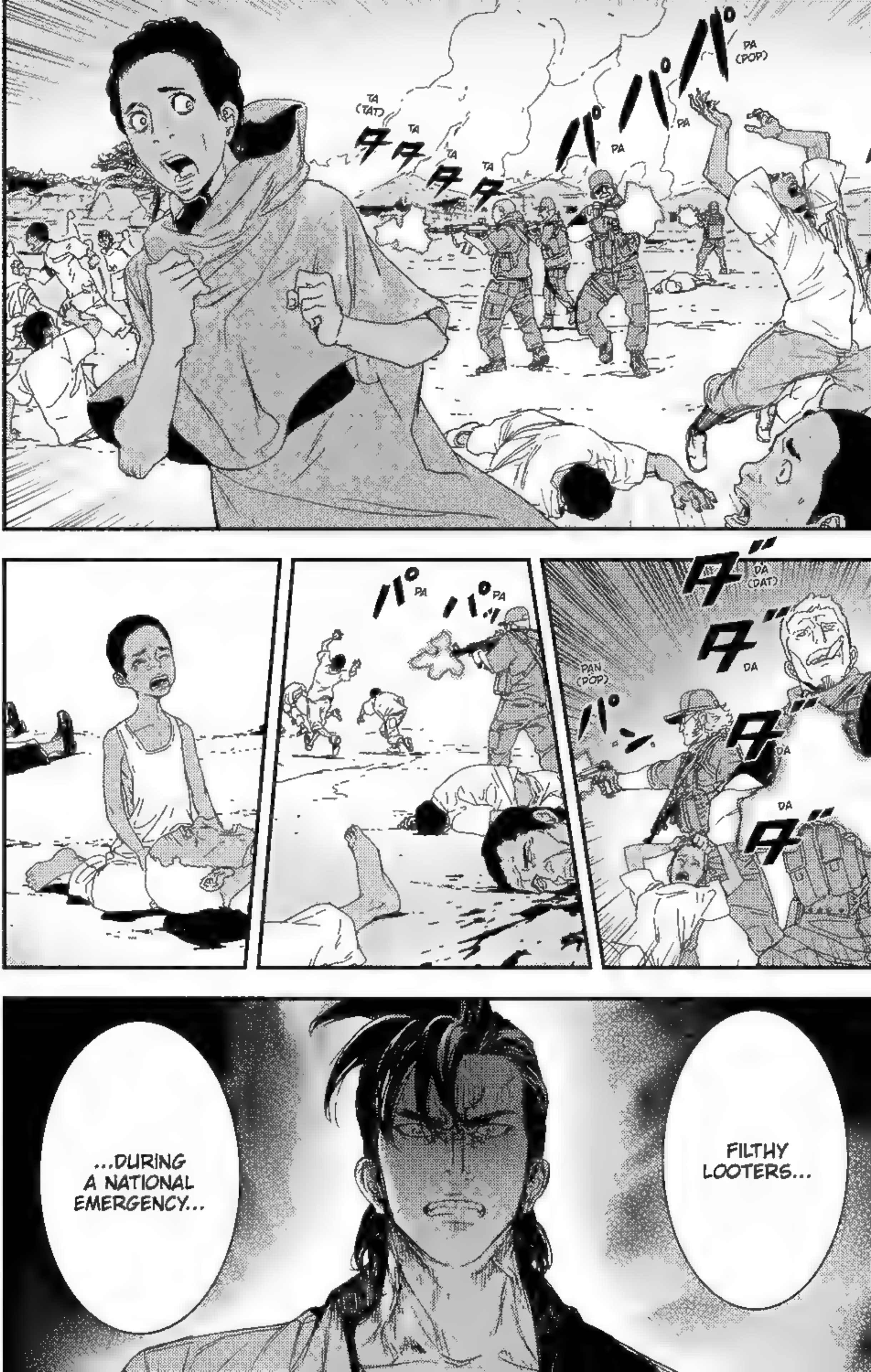

OUR ENEMIES ARE NOT JUST GALBOA AND THE TPC, BUT THE WISEMAN AND TRUMPS TEAM.
THERE'S ALSO UNCONFIRMED INFO FLOATING OUT THERE THAT TAUS HAS JOINED MISALT'S REBELLION FORCE.
THEN THERE'S HIJIKATA AND JESUS. PREPARE YOURSELF FOR A SERIOUSLY CHAOTIC BATTLE.
THIS OPERATION'S GOING TO GET PRETTY HAIRY BY THE END!

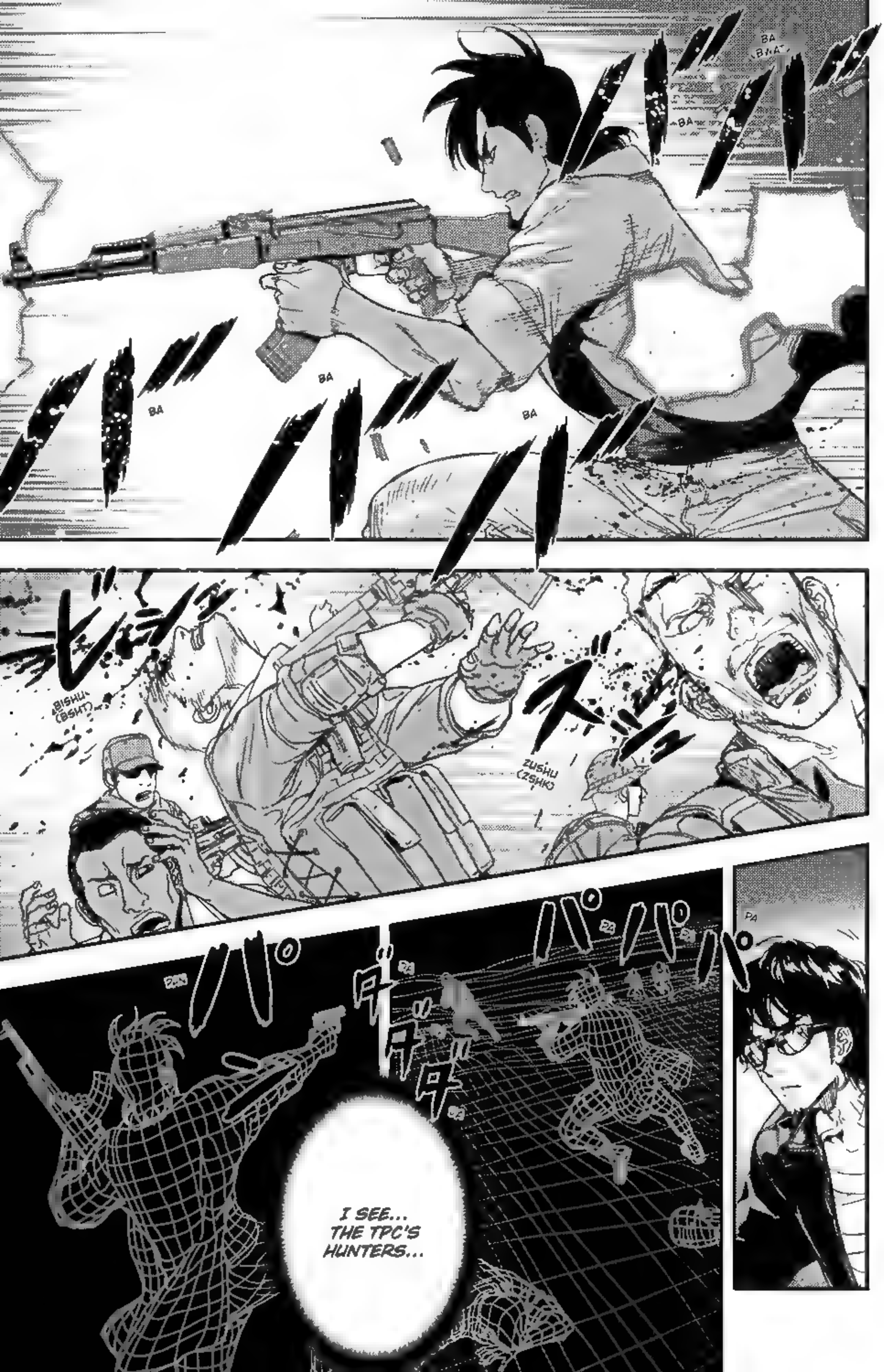

THIRTY KILOMETERS FROM THE CITY OF ZOTT
ザ ZA
ザッ ZA (MARCH)
ガッ GA (VOOM)
ザ ZA (ZWSHH)
ザ ZA
ザ ZA

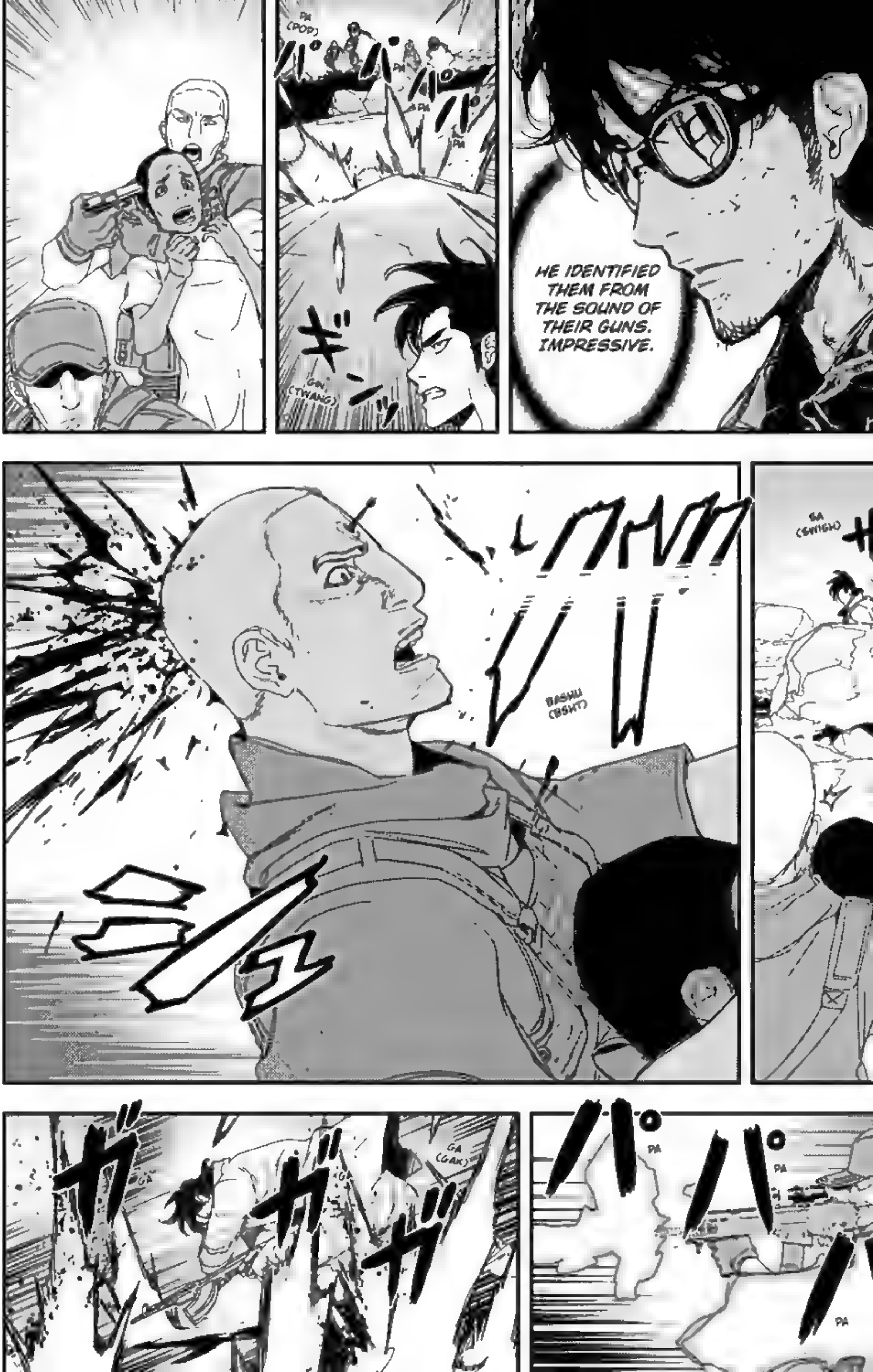


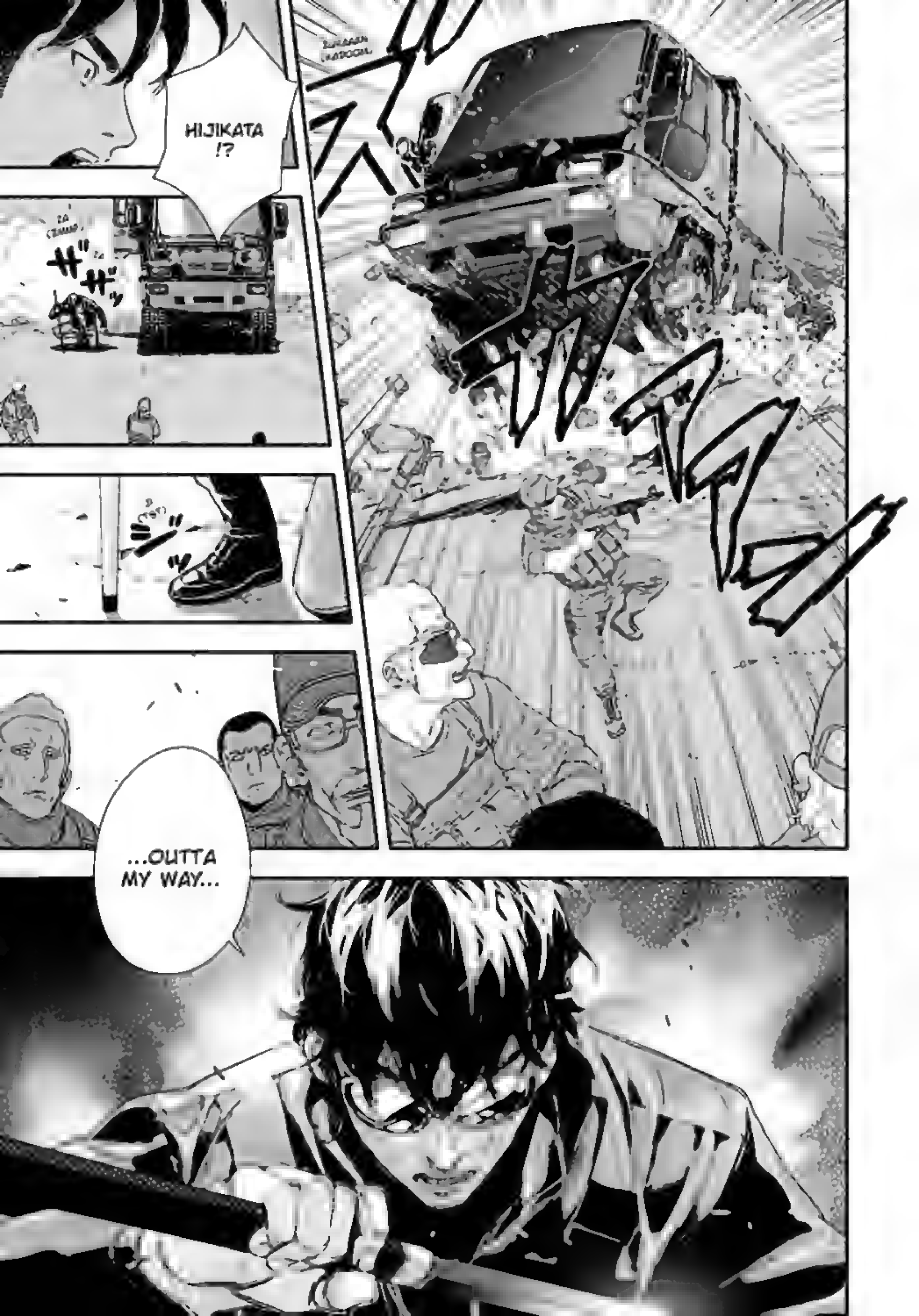

ブロロロ
BUROROROO VROOM
ギギ
ギギ

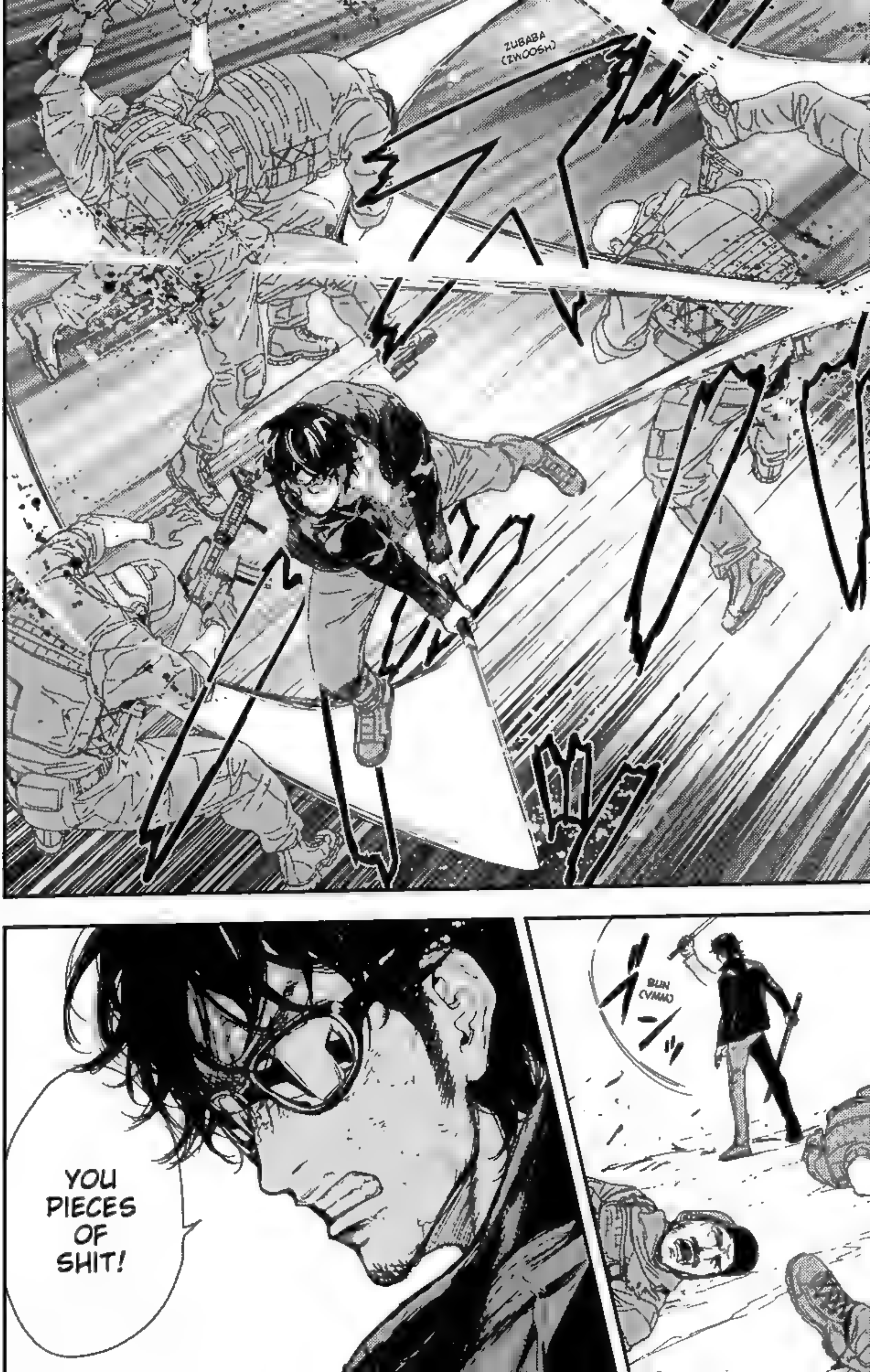

GAAA (VMM) ガー
...WHAT'S UP?
TA (TAT) タ TA タ TA タ TA タ TA タ TA タ TA タ TA
...
GUNSHOTS ...
BUOOO (VRRRM) オオオオブ
I'LL MAKE IT REAL QUICK.
KACHA (KCHIK) カチャ
?

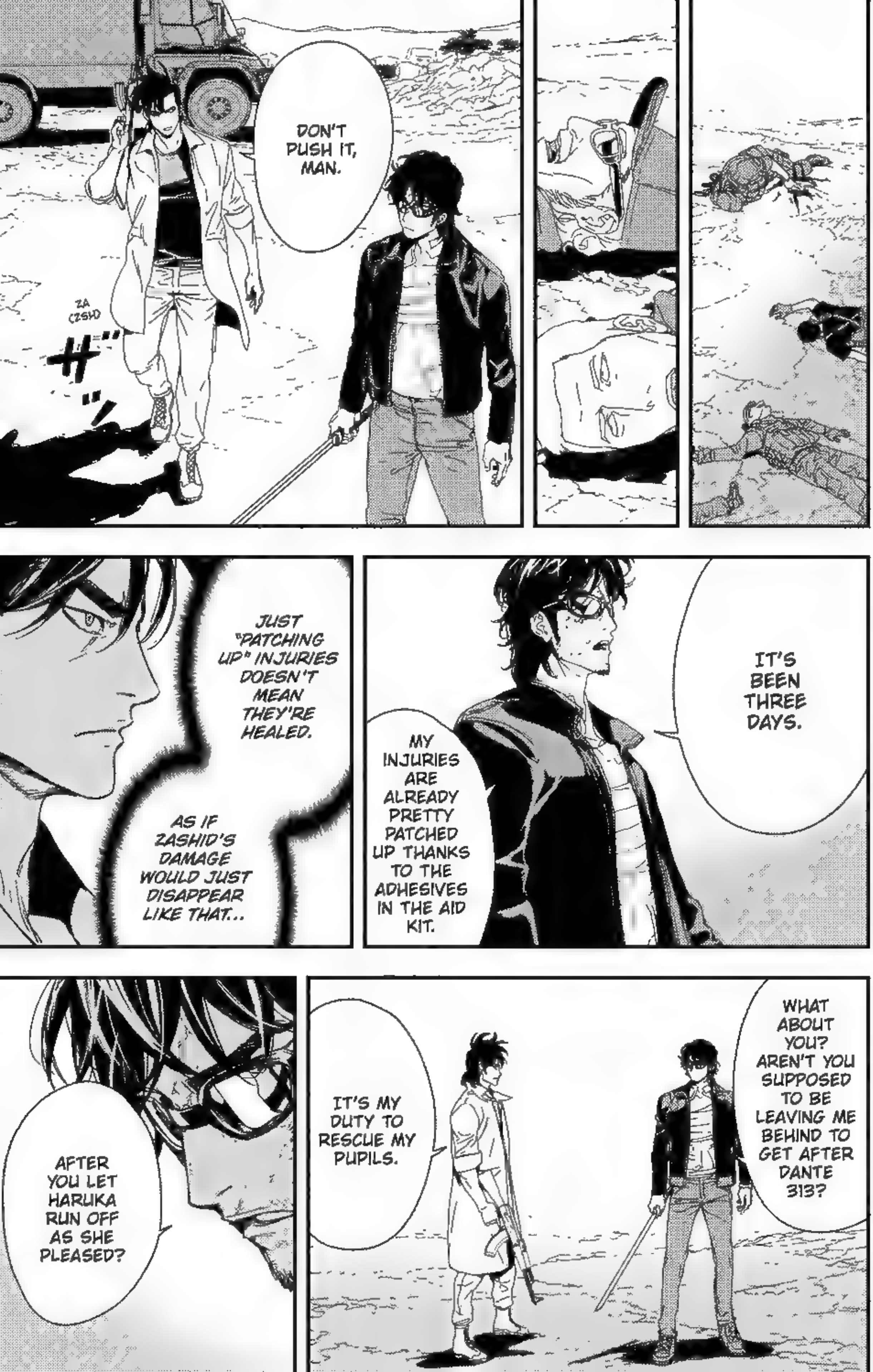

パ PA (POP)
パ PA
パ PA
タ TA (TAT)
タ TA
タ TA
タ TA
ダ DA (DAT)
ダ DA
ダ DA
ダ DA
パン PAN (POP)
パ PA
パッ PA
FILTHY LOOTERS...
...DURING A NATIONAL EMERGENCY...

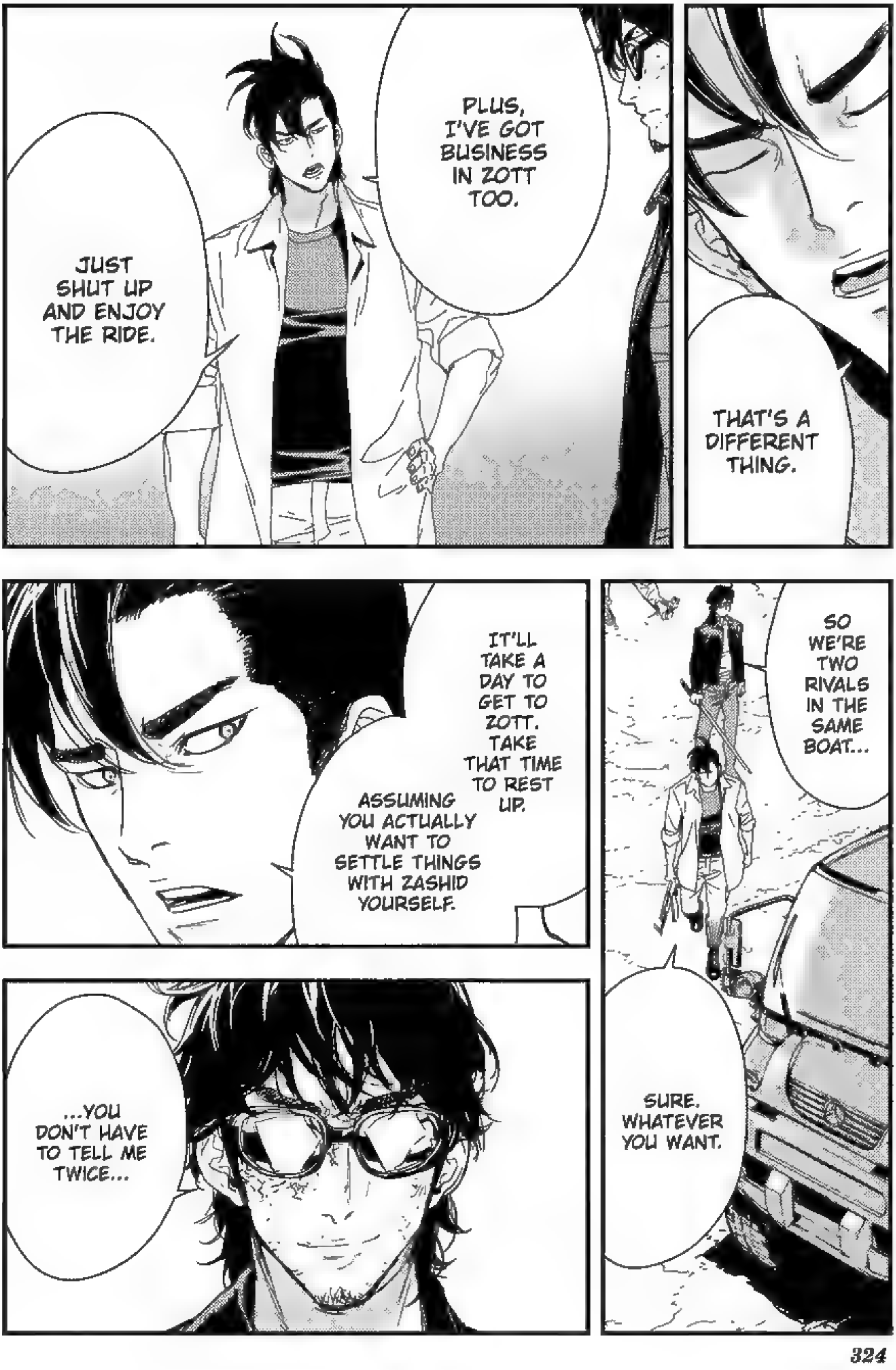

BA (BWAT)
BA
BA
BA
BA
ZUSHU (ZSHK)
BISHU (BSHT)
PA
PA
PA
PA
I SEE... THE TPC'S HUNTERS...

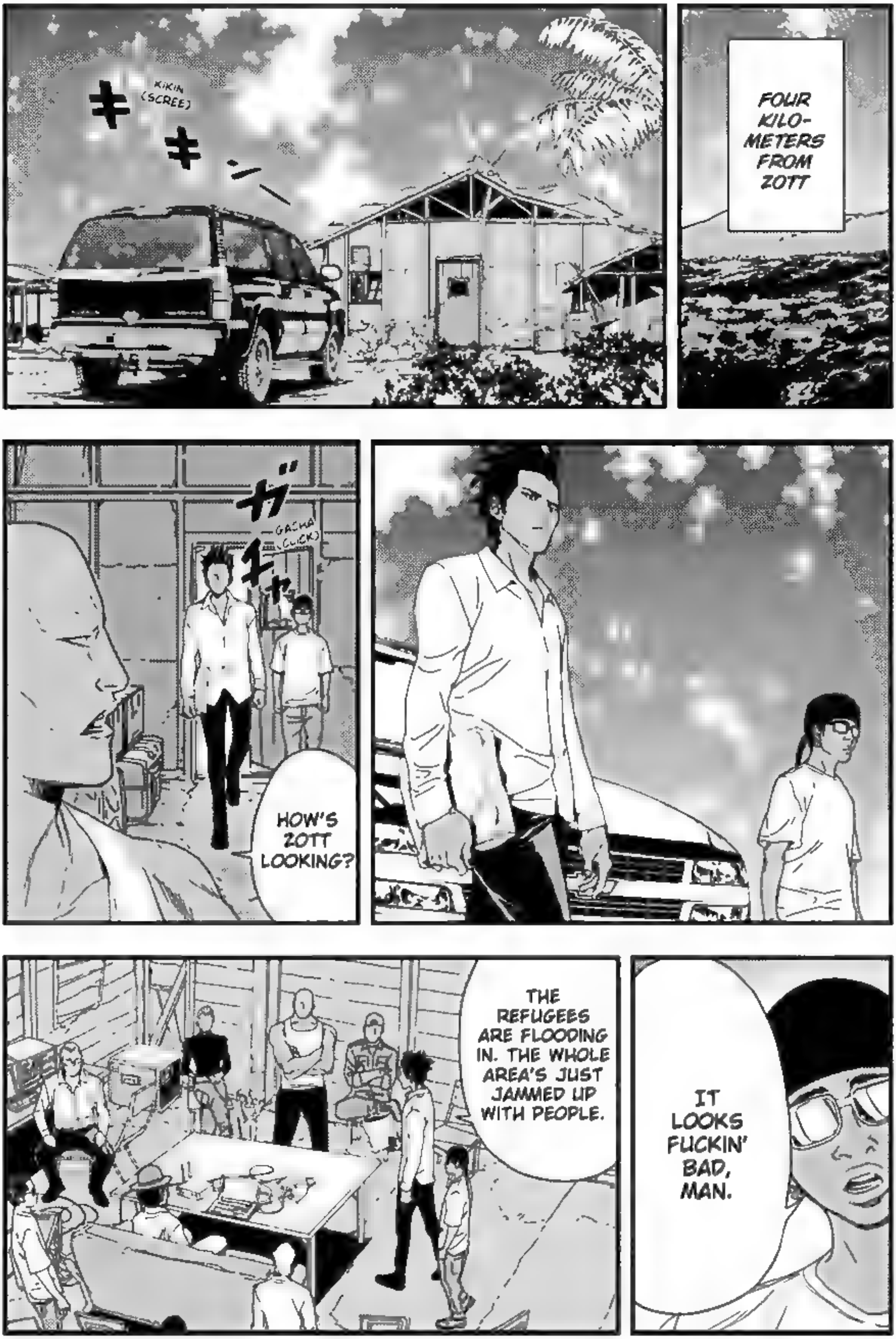

HE IDENTIFIED THEM FROM THE SOUND OF THEIR GUNS. IMPRESSIVE.
PA (POP)
PA
PA
PA
PA
GAN (TWANG)
SA (SWISH)
BASHU (BSHT)
PA
PA
PA
GA (GAK)
GA
GA

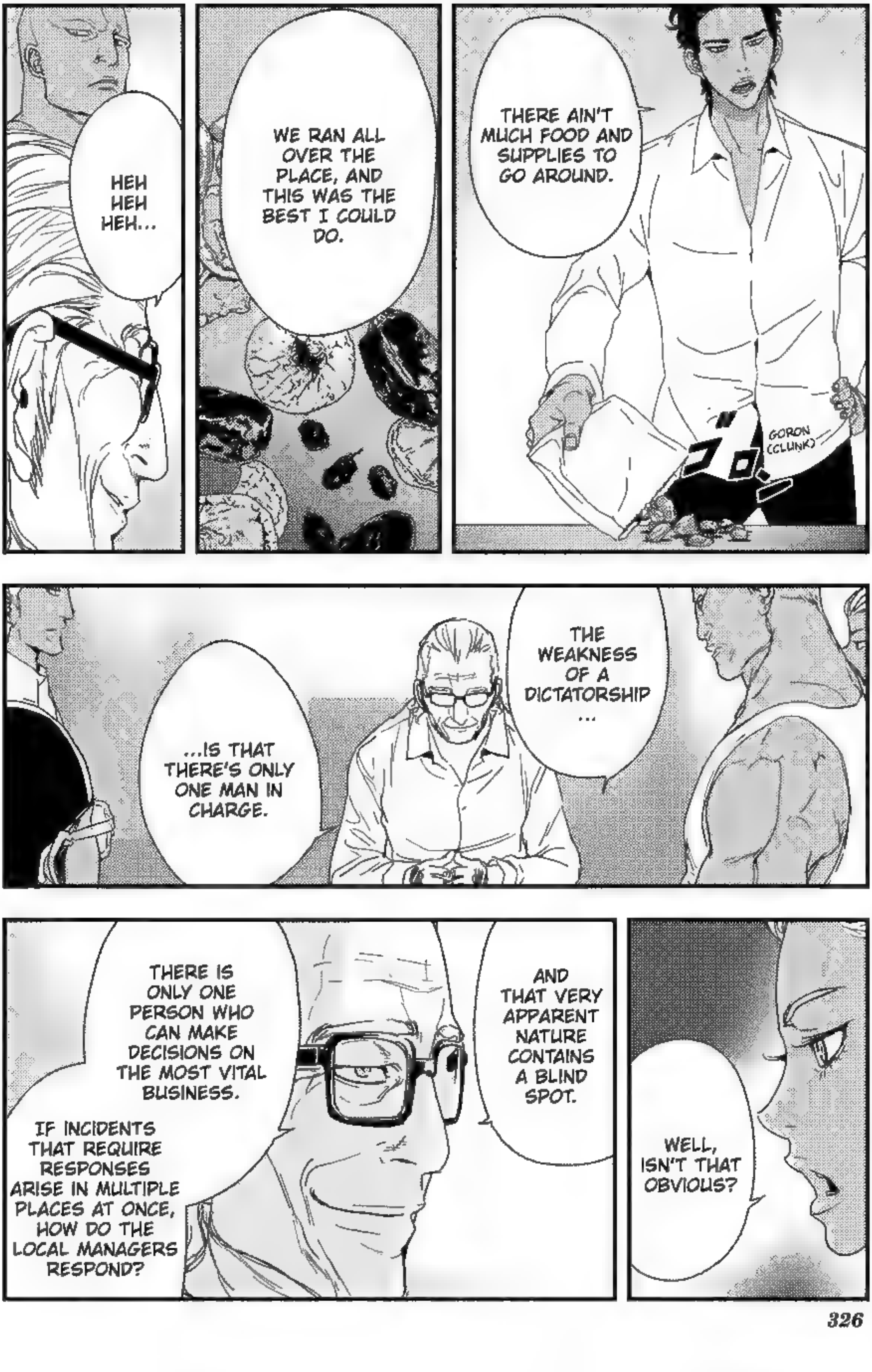

ZUGAAAN (KABOOM)
HIJIKATA!?
ZA (TRAMP)
ZA
...OUTTA MY WAY...

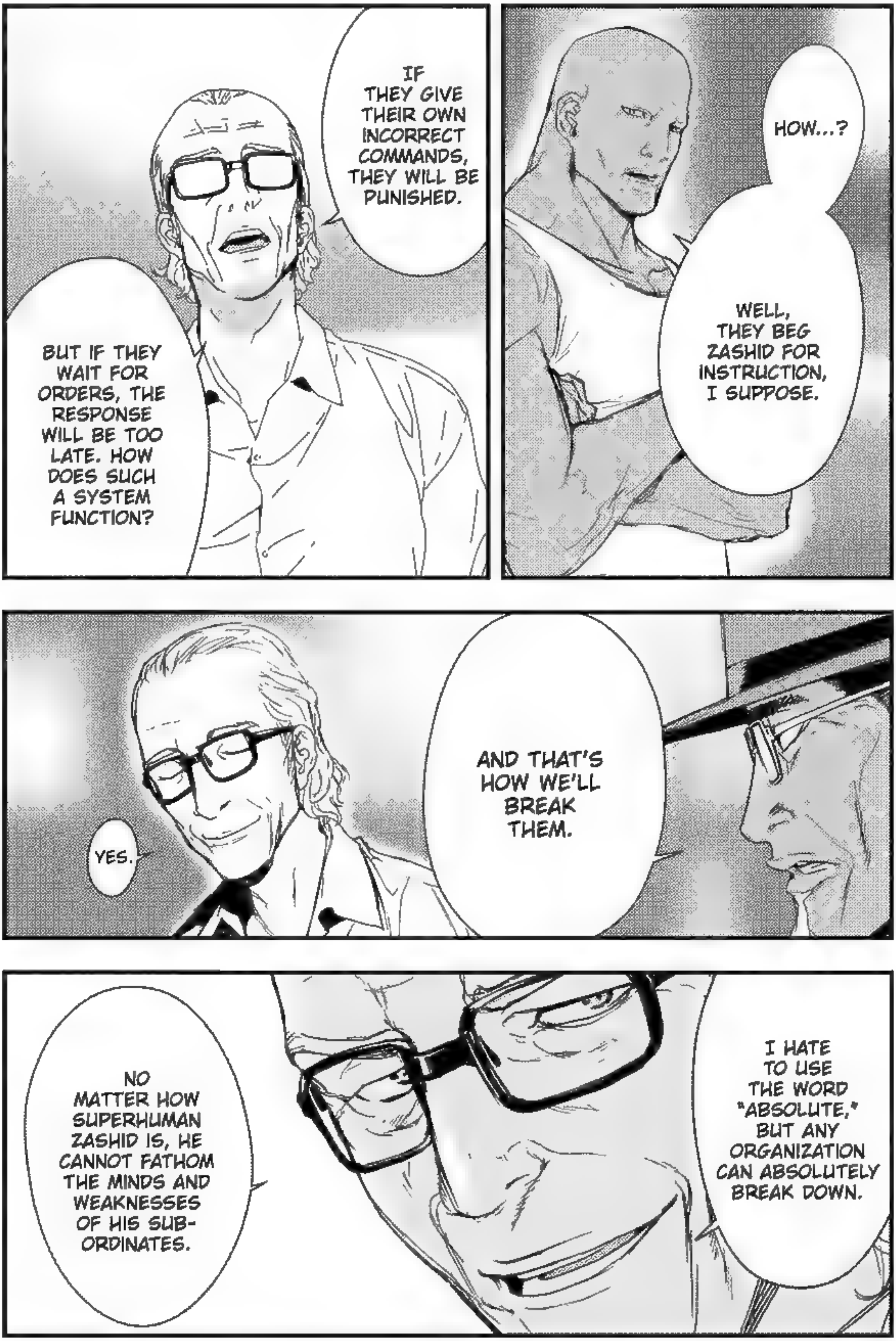

ZUBABA
(ZWOOSH)
BUN
(VMM)
YOU PIECES OF SHIT!

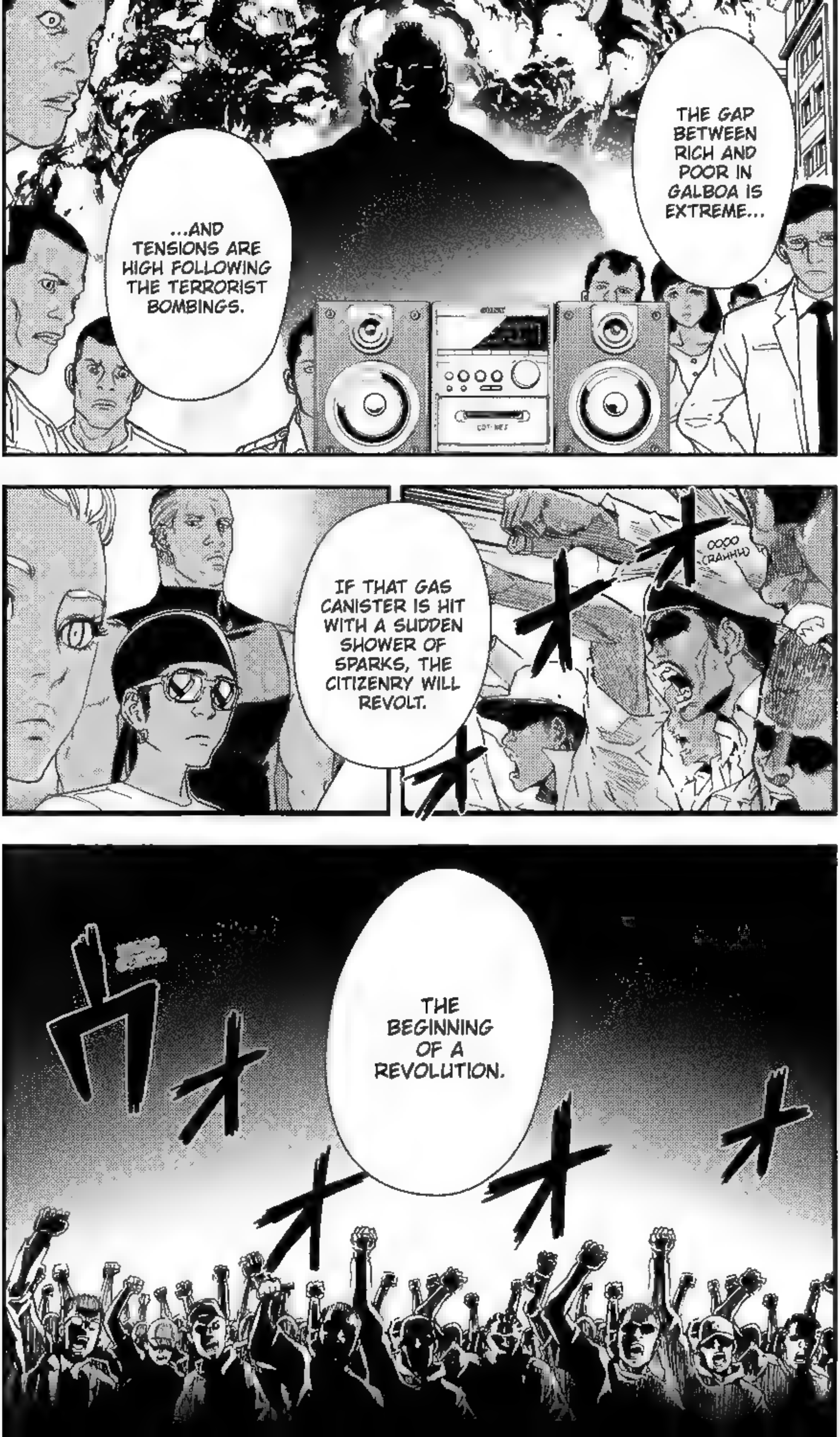

DON'T PUSH IT, MAN.
ZA (ZSH)
IT'S BEEN THREE DAYS.
MY INJURIES ARE ALREADY PRETTY PATCHED UP THANKS TO THE ADHESIVES IN THE AID KIT.
JUST "PATCHING UP" INJURIES DOESN'T MEAN THEY'RE HEALED.
AS IF ZASHID'S DAMAGE WOULD JUST DISAPPEAR LIKE THAT...
WHAT ABOUT YOU? AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE LEAVING ME BEHIND TO GET AFTER DANTE 313?
IT'S MY DUTY TO RESCUE MY PUPILS.
AFTER YOU LET HARUKA RUN OFF AS SHE PLEASED?

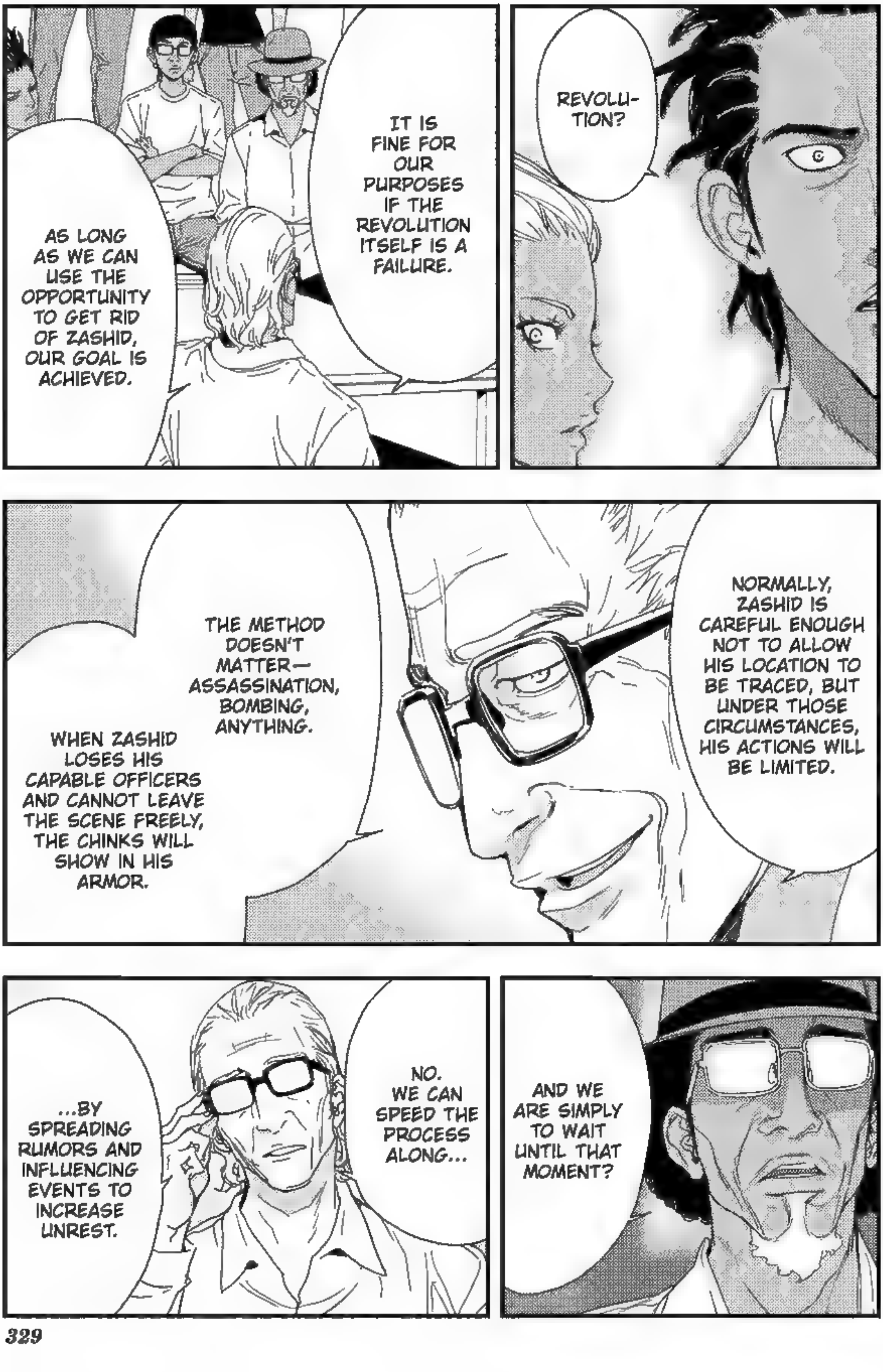

JUST SHUT UP AND ENJOY THE RIDE.
PLUS, I'VE GOT BUSINESS IN ZOTT TOO.
THAT'S A DIFFERENT THING.
IT'LL TAKE A DAY TO GET TO ZOTT. TAKE THAT TIME TO REST UP.
ASSUMING YOU ACTUALLY WANT TO SETTLE THINGS WITH ZASHID YOURSELF.
...YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL ME TWICE...
SO WE'RE TWO RIVALS IN THE SAME BOAT...
SURE. WHATEVER YOU WANT.

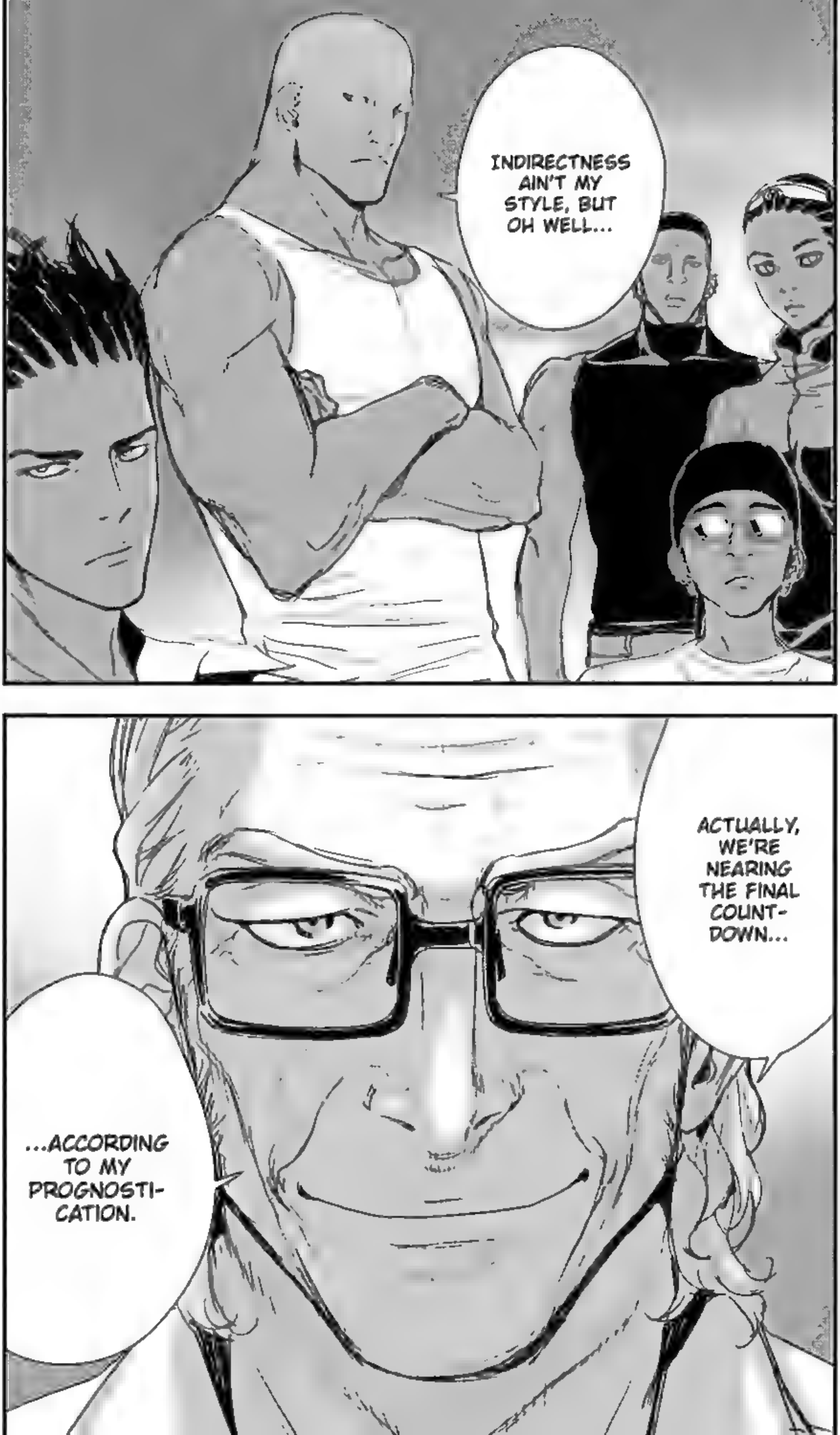

FOUR KILO-METERS FROM ZOTT
KIKIN (SCREE)
GACHA (CLICK)
HOW'S ZOTT LOOKING?
IT LOOKS FUCKIN' BAD, MAN.
THE REFUGEES ARE FLOODING IN. THE WHOLE AREA'S JUST JAMMED UP WITH PEOPLE.

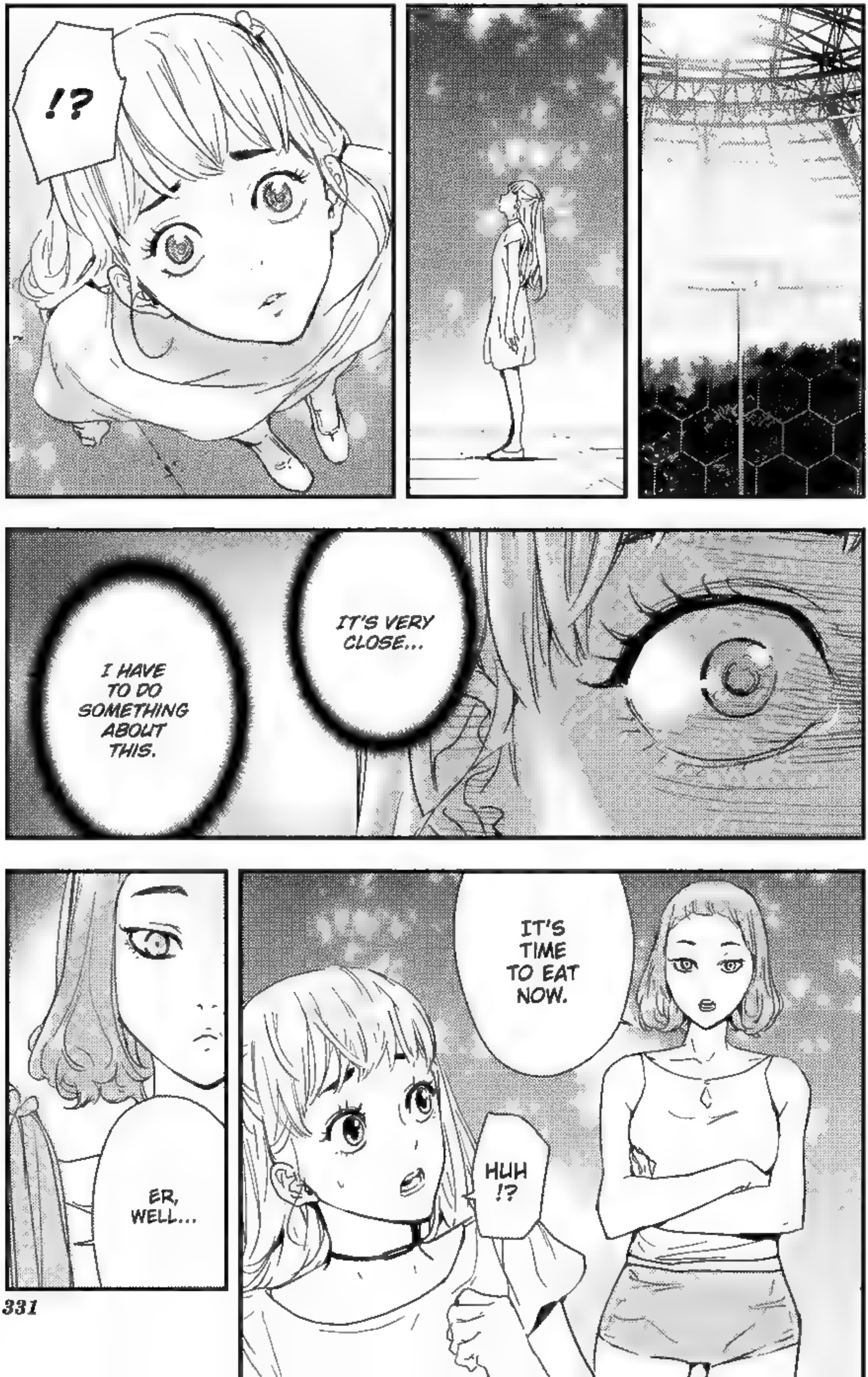

THERE AIN'T MUCH FOOD AND SUPPLIES TO GO AROUND.
GORON (CLUNK)
WE RAN ALL OVER THE PLACE, AND THIS WAS THE BEST I COULD DO.
HEH HEH HEH...
THE WEAKNESS OF A DICTATORSHIP ...
...IS THAT THERE'S ONLY ONE MAN IN CHARGE.
WELL, ISN'T THAT OBVIOUS?
THERE IS ONLY ONE PERSON WHO CAN MAKE DECISIONS ON THE MOST VITAL BUSINESS.
AND THAT VERY APPARENT NATURE CONTAINS A BLIND SPOT.
IF INCIDENTS THAT REQUIRE RESPONSES ARISE IN MULTIPLE PLACES AT ONCE, HOW DO THE LOCAL MANAGERS RESPOND?


HOW...?
WELL, THEY BEG ZASHID FOR INSTRUCTION, I SUPPOSE.
IF THEY GIVE THEIR OWN INCORRECT COMMANDS, THEY WILL BE PUNISHED.
BUT IF THEY WAIT FOR ORDERS, THE RESPONSE WILL BE TOO LATE. HOW DOES SUCH A SYSTEM FUNCTION?
AND THAT'S HOW WE'LL BREAK THEM.
YES.
I HATE TO USE THE WORD "ABSOLUTE," BUT ANY ORGANIZATION CAN ABSOLUTELY BREAK DOWN.
NO MATTER HOW SUPERHUMAN ZASHID IS, HE CANNOT FATHOM THE MINDS AND WEAKNESSES OF HIS SUBORDINATES.


THE GAP BETWEEN RICH AND POOR IN GALBOA IS EXTREME...
...AND TENSIONS ARE HIGH FOLLOWING THE TERRORIST BOMBINGS.
OOOO (RAHHH)
IF THAT GAS CANISTER IS HIT WITH A SUDDEN SHOWER OF SPARKS, THE CITIZENRY WILL REVOLT.
THE BEGINNING OF A REVOLUTION.


REVOLUTION?
IT IS FINE FOR OUR PURPOSES IF THE REVOLUTION ITSELF IS A FAILURE.
AS LONG AS WE CAN USE THE OPPORTUNITY TO GET RID OF ZASHID, OUR GOAL IS ACHIEVED.
NORMALLY, ZASHID IS CAREFUL ENOUGH NOT TO ALLOW HIS LOCATION TO BE TRACED, BUT UNDER THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES, HIS ACTIONS WILL BE LIMITED.
THE METHOD DOESN'T MATTER—ASSASSINATION, BOMBING, ANYTHING.
WHEN ZASHID LOSES HIS CAPABLE OFFICERS AND CANNOT LEAVE THE SCENE FREELY, THE CHINKS WILL SHOW IN HIS ARMOR.
AND WE ARE SIMPLY TO WAIT UNTIL THAT MOMENT?
NO. WE CAN SPEED THE PROCESS ALONG...
...BY SPREADING RUMORS AND INFLUENCING EVENTS TO INCREASE UNREST.


INDIRECTNESS AIN'T MY STYLE, BUT OH WELL...
ACTUALLY, WE'RE NEARING THE FINAL COUNTDOWN...
...ACCORDING TO MY PROGNOSTICATION.


!?
IT'S VERY CLOSE...
I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THIS.
IT'S TIME TO EAT NOW.
HUH !?
ER, WELL...

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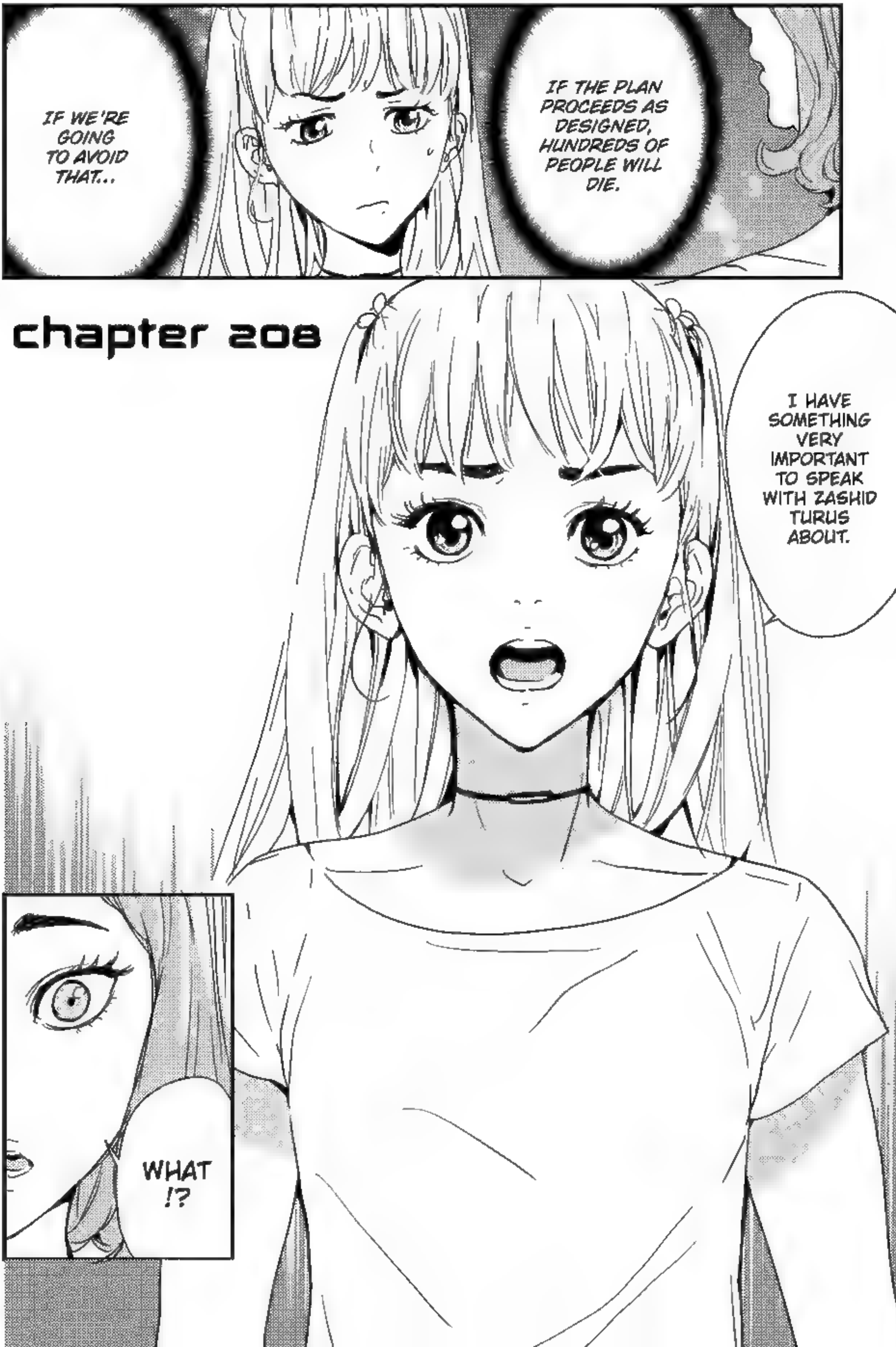
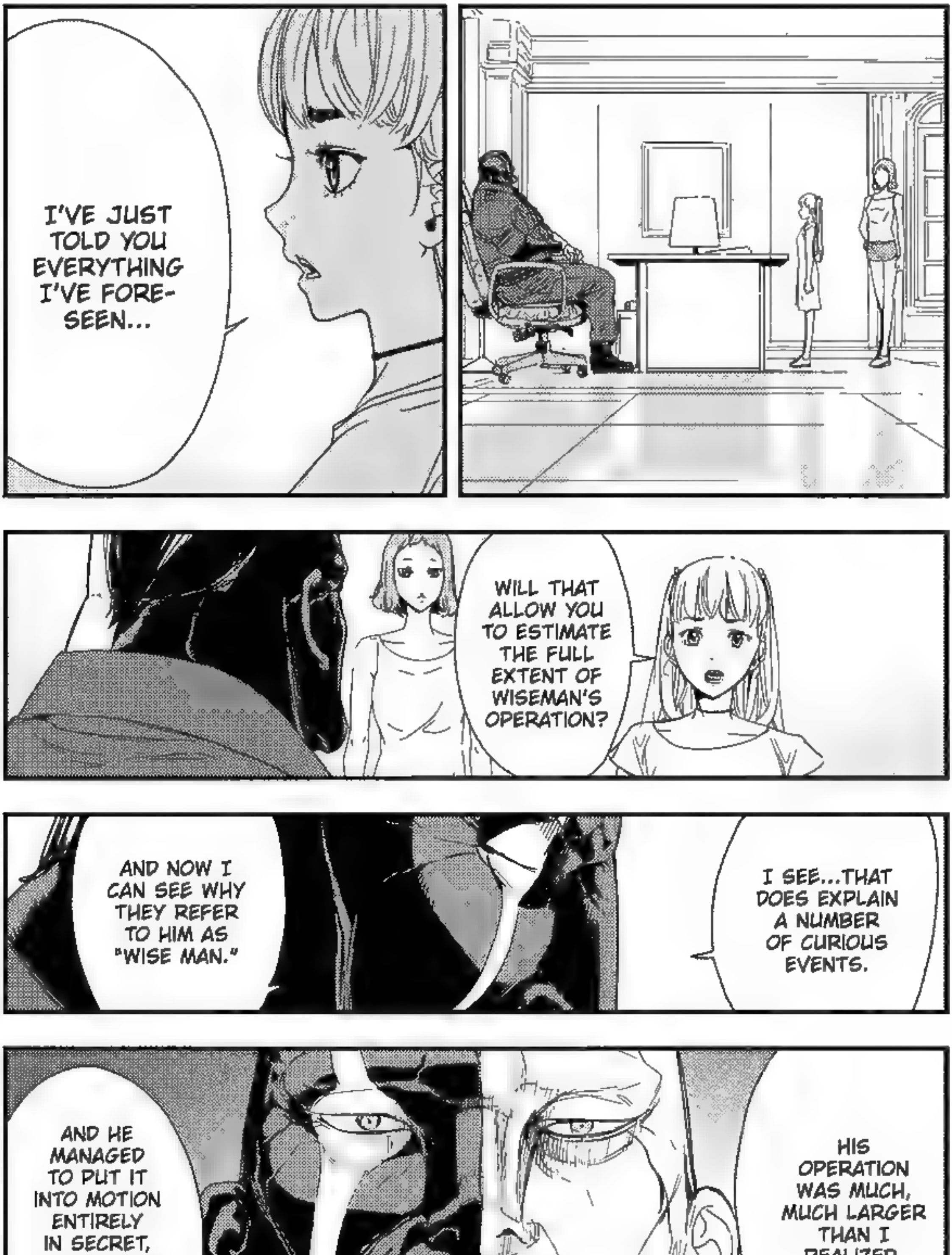
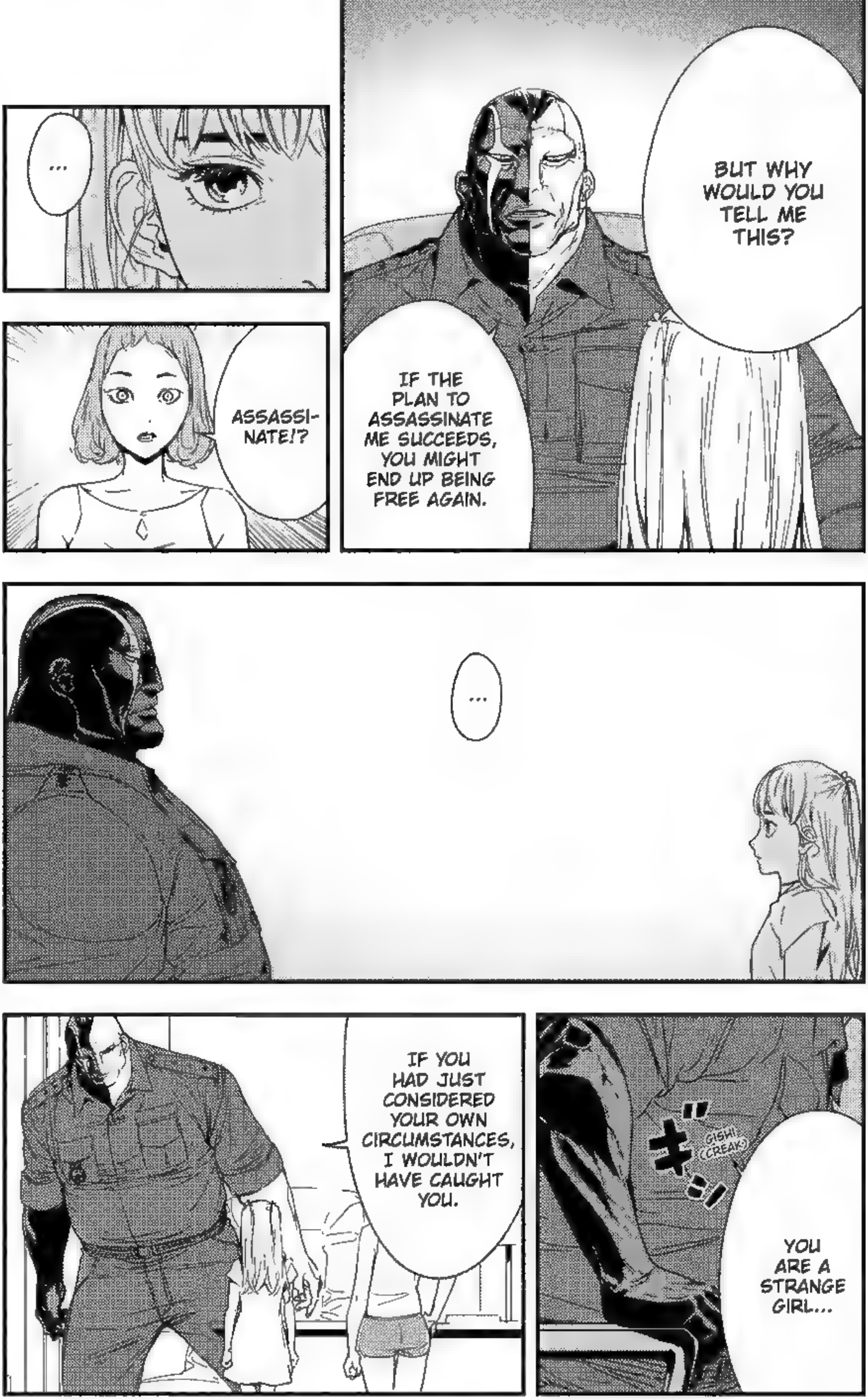
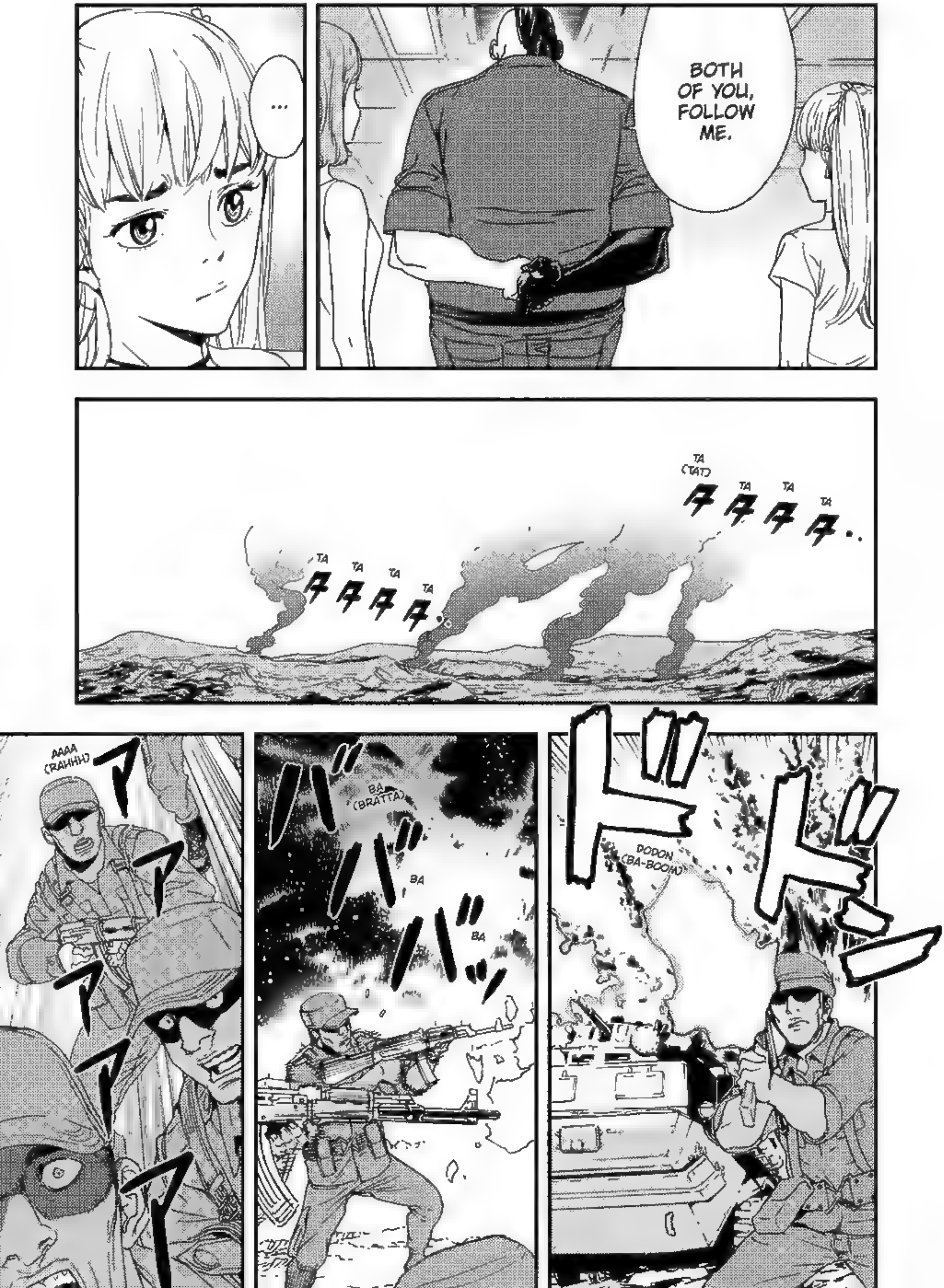
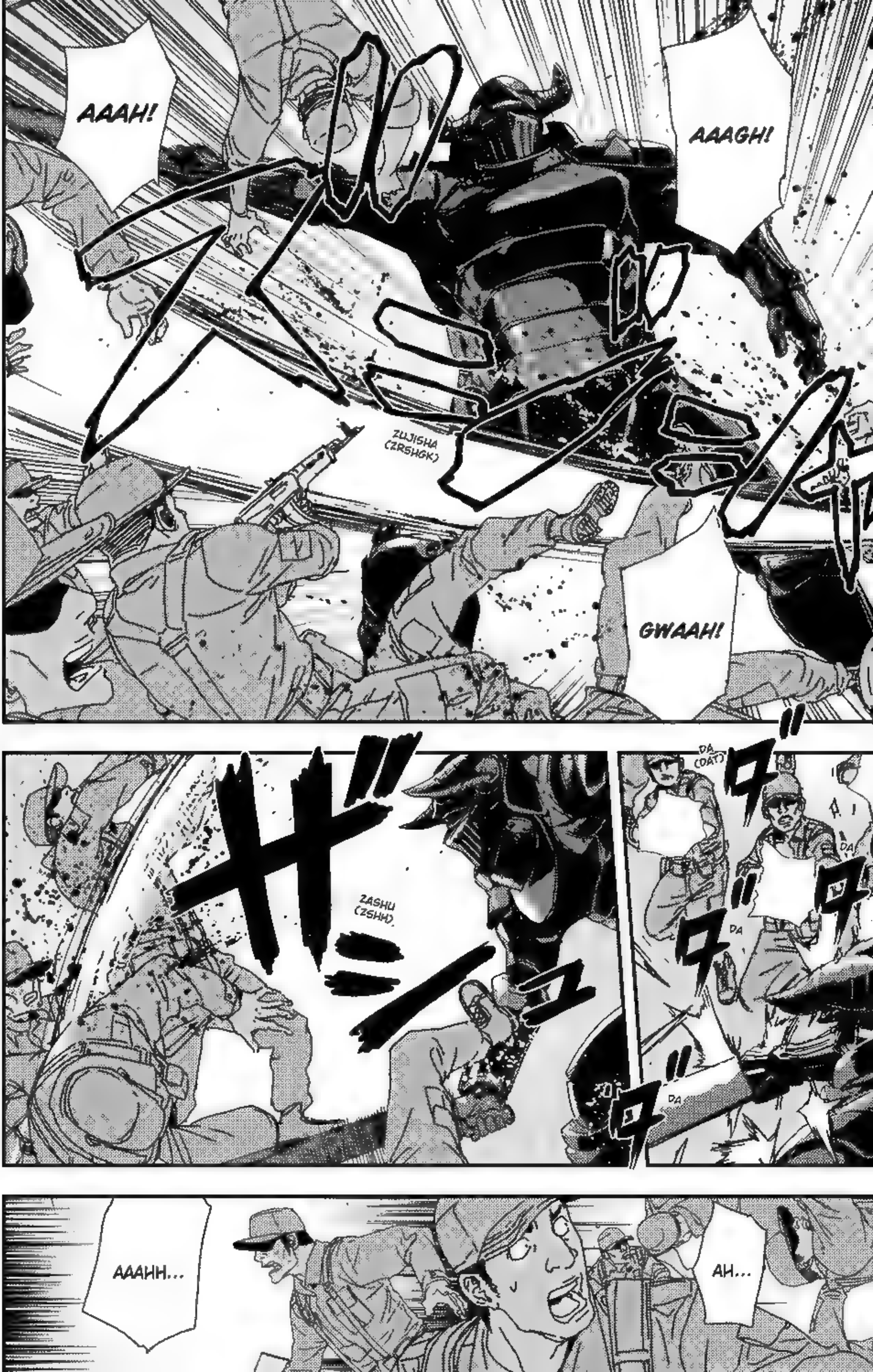
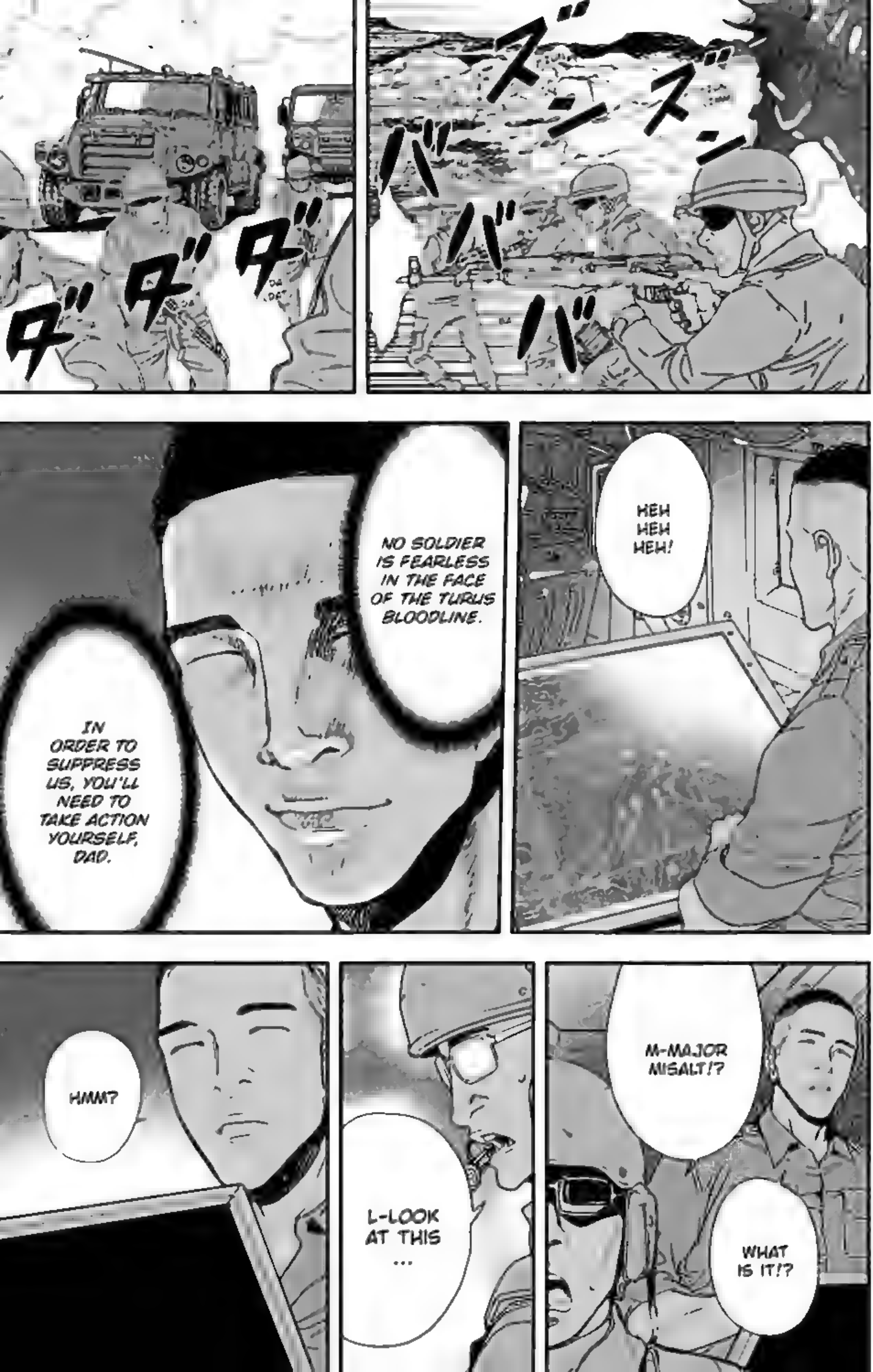

IF THE PLAN PROCEEDS AS DESIGNED, HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE WILL DIE.
IF WE'RE GOING TO AVOID THAT...
I HAVE SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT TO SPEAK WITH ZASHID TURUS ABOUT.
WHAT !?


I'VE JUST TOLD YOU EVERYTHING I'VE FORESEEN...
WILL THAT ALLOW YOU TO ESTIMATE THE FULL EXTENT OF WISEMAN'S OPERATION?
I SEE...THAT DOES EXPLAIN A NUMBER OF CURIOUS EVENTS.
AND NOW I CAN SEE WHY THEY REFER TO HIM AS "WISE MAN."
HIS OPERATION WAS MUCH, MUCH LARGER THAN I REALIZED.
AND HE MANAGED TO PUT IT INTO MOTION ENTIRELY IN SECRET, WITHOUT ME REALIZING ANY OF IT. THE MAN IS BOLD, I'LL GIVE HIM THAT.


BUT WHY WOULD YOU TELL ME THIS?
IF THE PLAN TO ASSASSINATE ME SUCCEEDS, YOU MIGHT END UP BEING FREE AGAIN.
...
ASSASSINATE!?
...
ギシ
GISHI (CREAK)
YOU ARE A STRANGE GIRL...
IF YOU HAD JUST CONSIDERED YOUR OWN CIRCUMSTANCES, I WOULDN'T HAVE CAUGHT YOU.


BOTH OF YOU, FOLLOW ME.
...
TA (TAT) TA TA TA
タタタタ..
TA TA TA TA
タタタタ
ドドン
DODON (BA-BOOM)
バババッ
BA (BRATTA) BA BA
アアアア
AAAA (RAHHH)


AAAGH!
AAAH!
ZUJISHA (ZRSHGK)
GWAAH!
DA (DAT)
DA
DA
DA
ZASHU (ZSHH)
AH...
AAAHH...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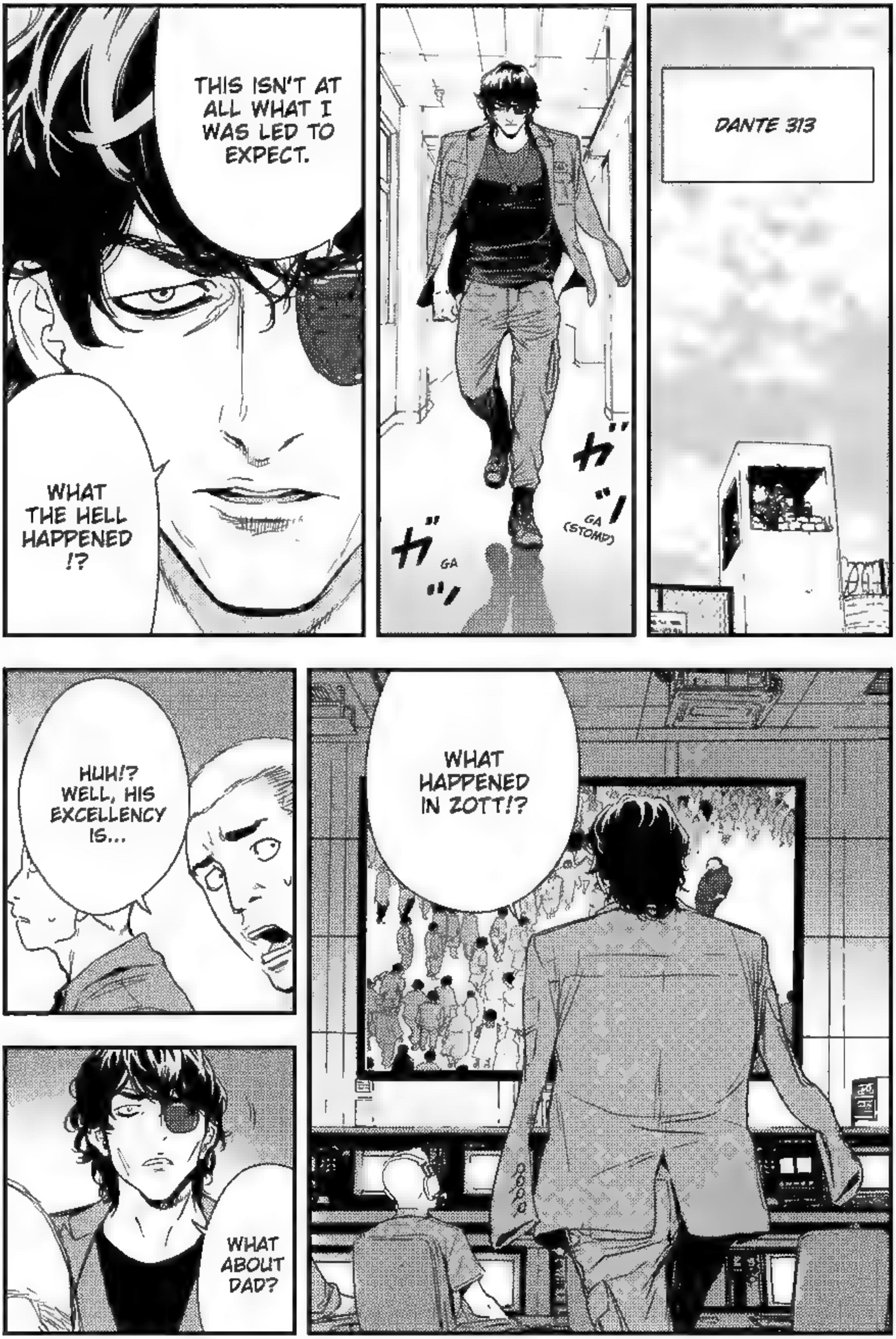
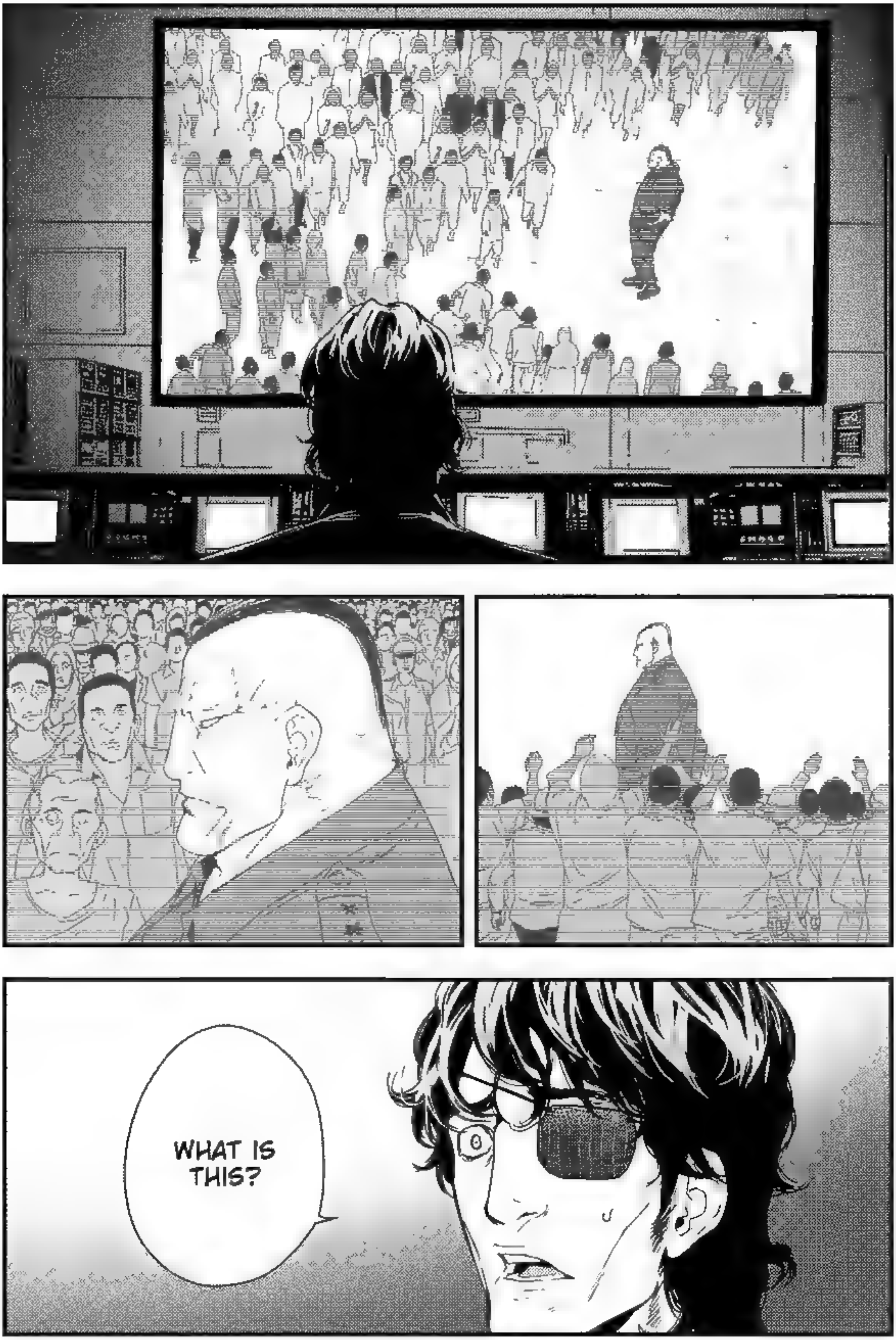
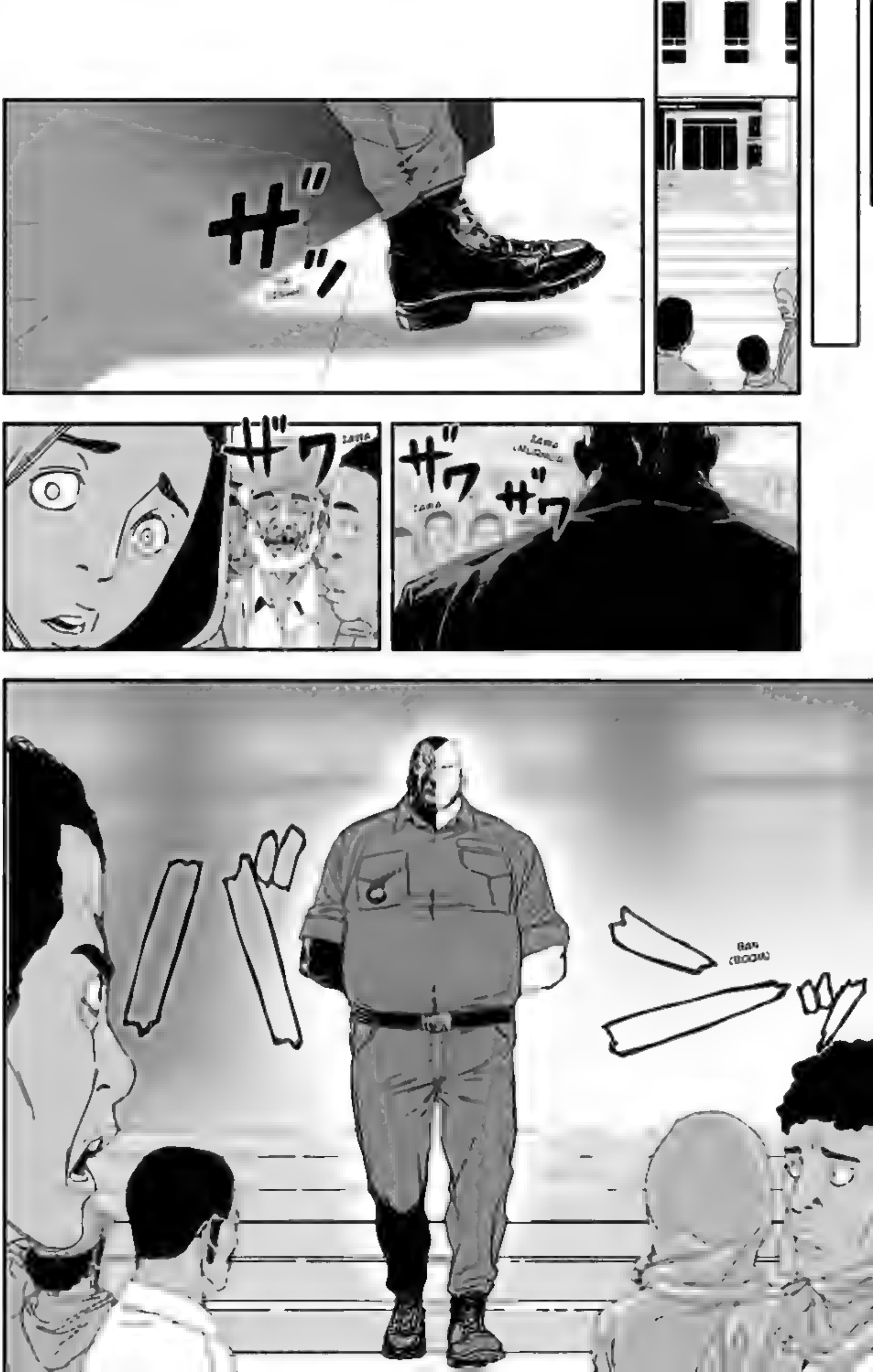
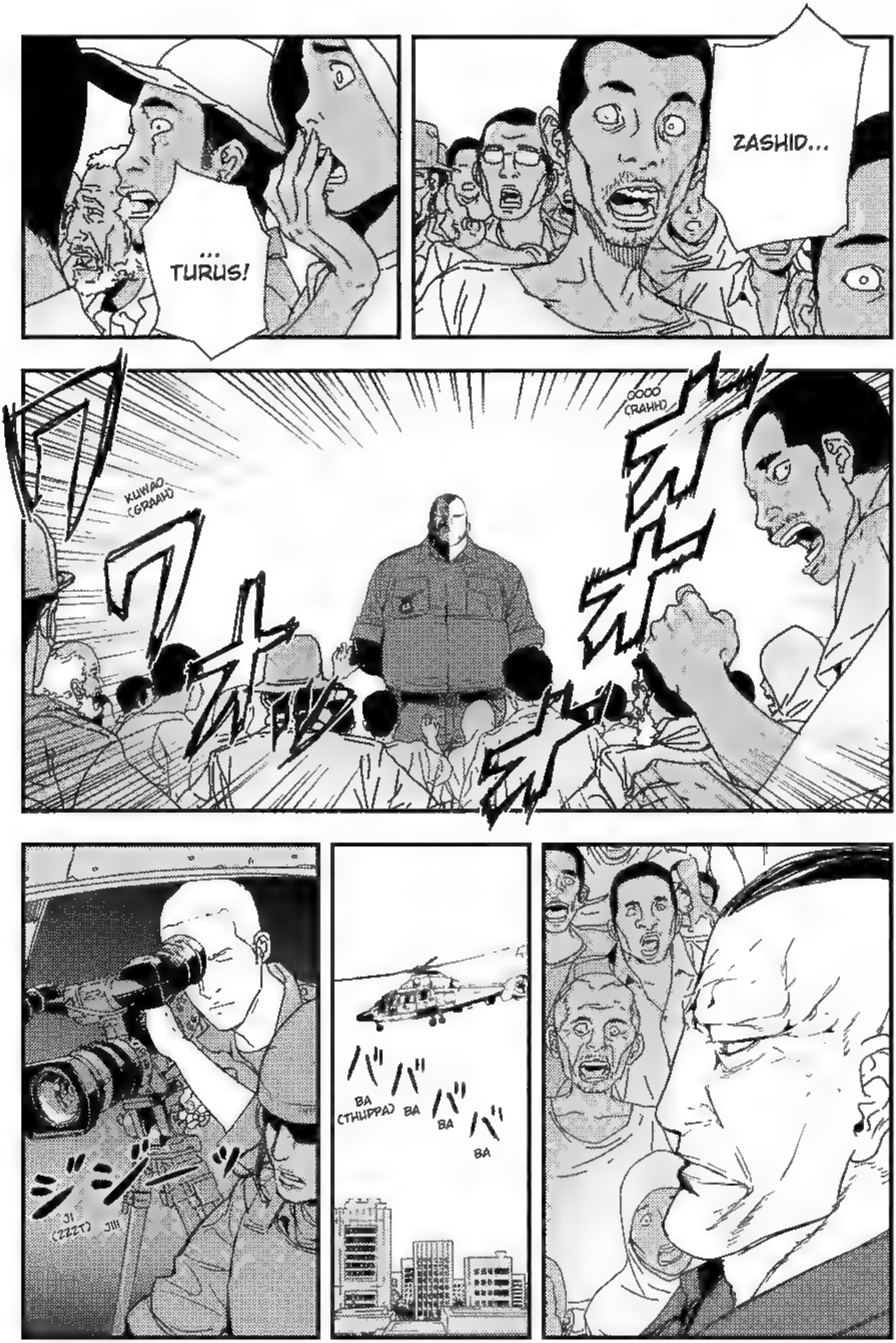
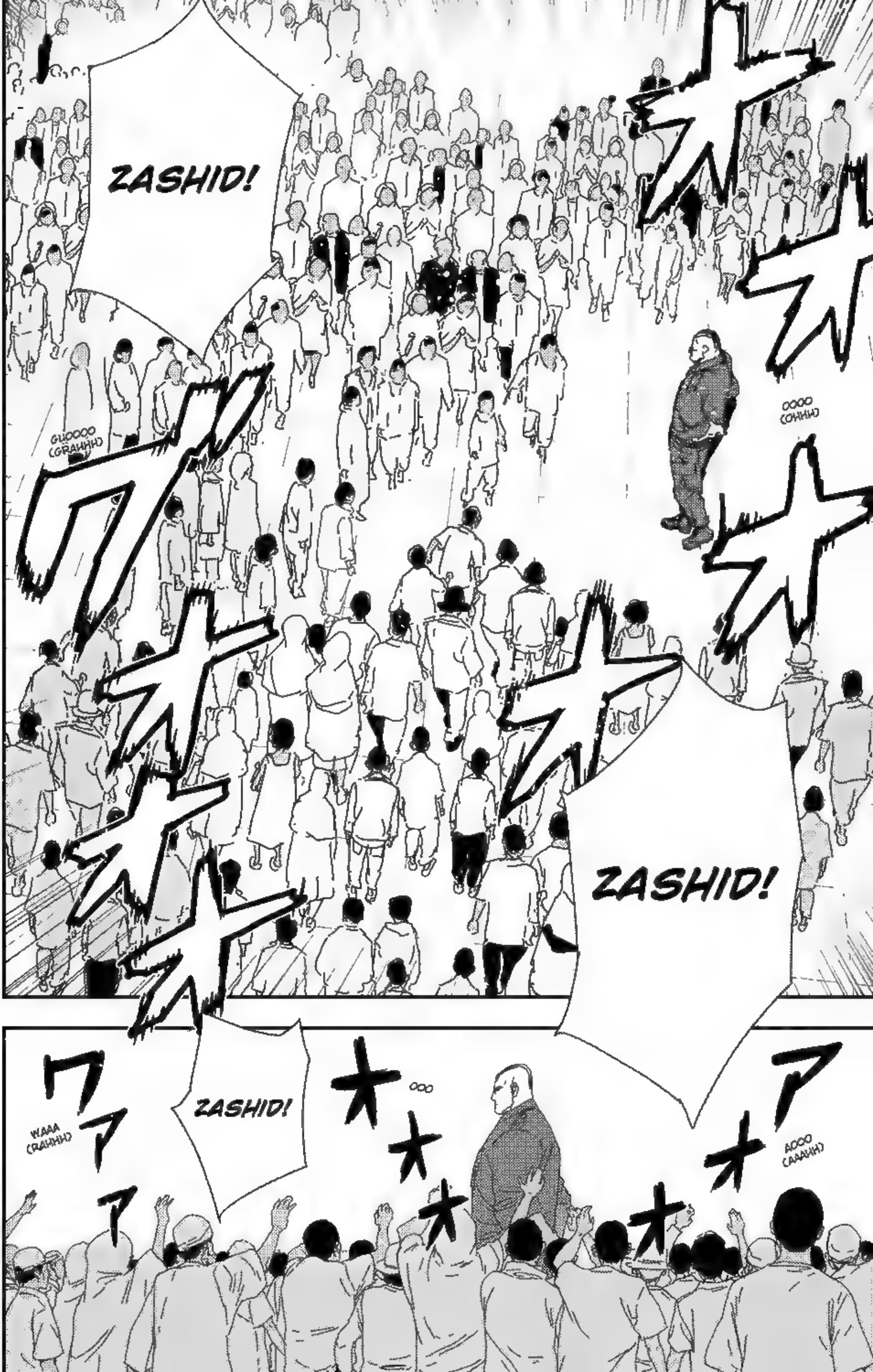
DA DAT
HEH HEH HEH!
NO SOLDIER IS FEARLESS IN THE FACE OF THE TURUS BLOODLINE.
IN ORDER TO SUPPRESS US, YOU'LL NEED TO TAKE ACTION YOURSELF, DAD.
M-MAJOR MISALT!?
WHAT IS IT!?
L-LOOK AT THIS ...
HMM?

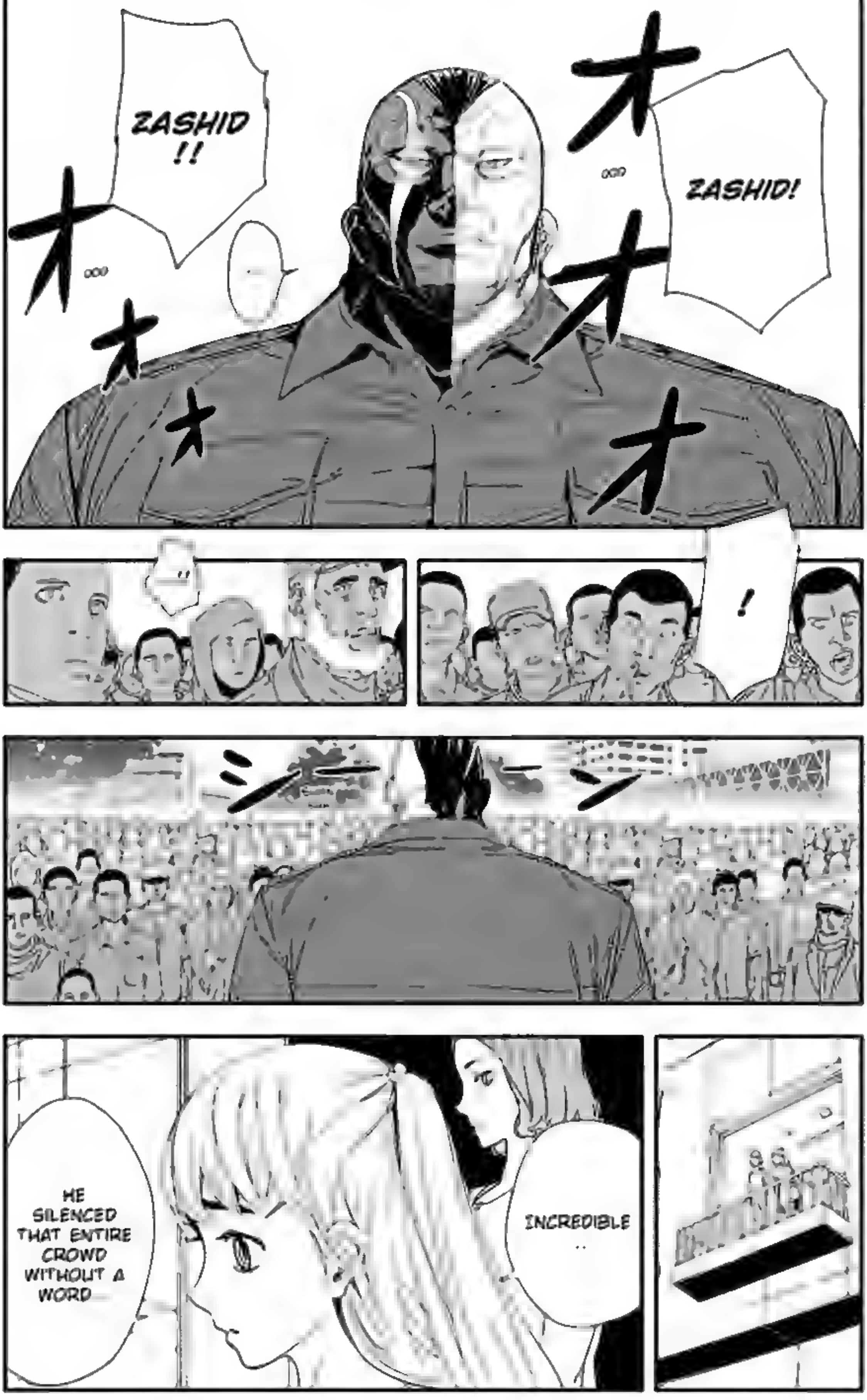

DANTE 313
ガッ
GA (STOMP)
ガッ
GA
THIS ISN'T AT ALL WHAT I WAS LED TO EXPECT.
WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED!?
WHAT HAPPENED IN ZOTT!?
HUH!? WELL, HIS EXCELLENCY IS...
WHAT ABOUT DAD?

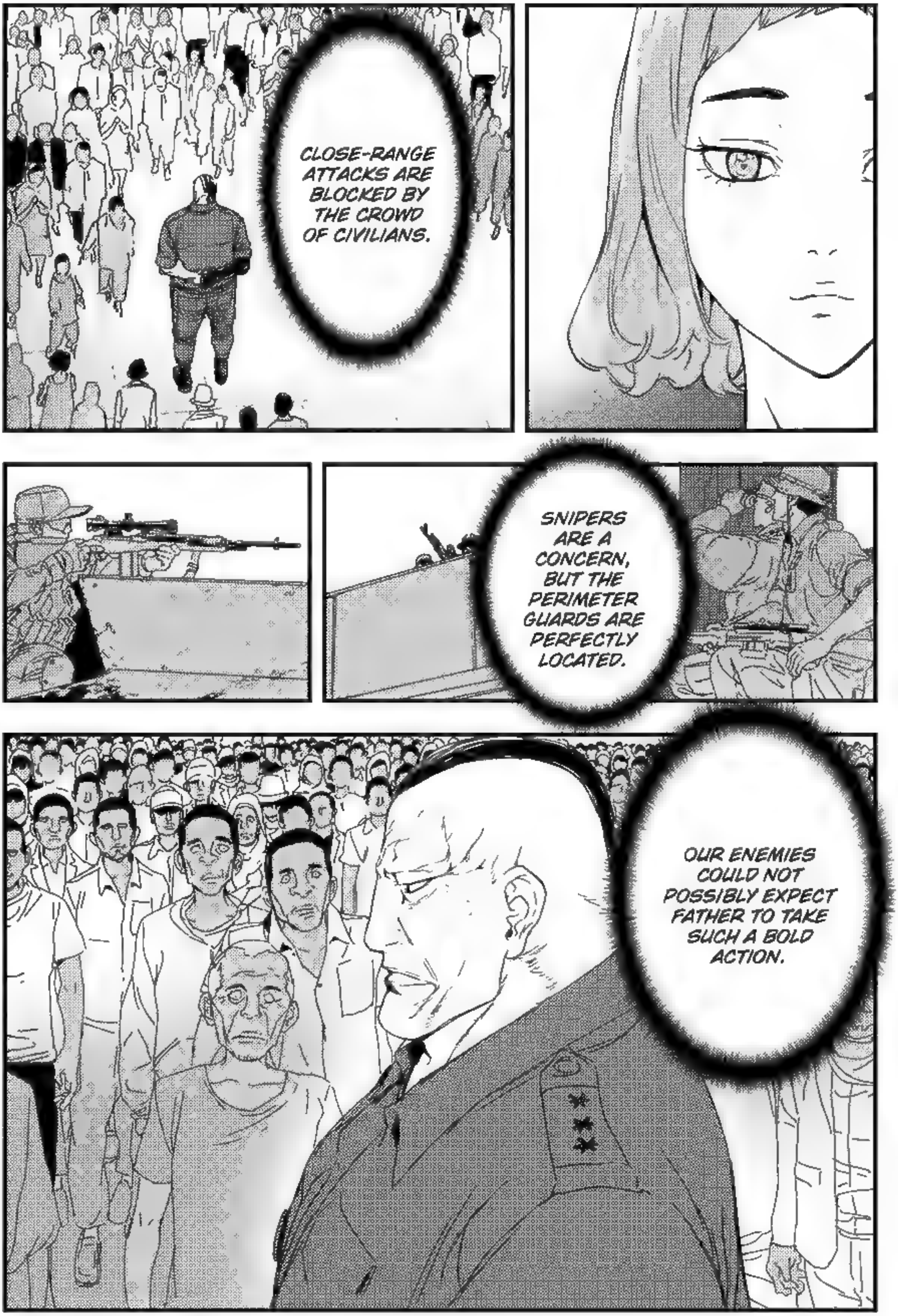

WHAT IS THIS?

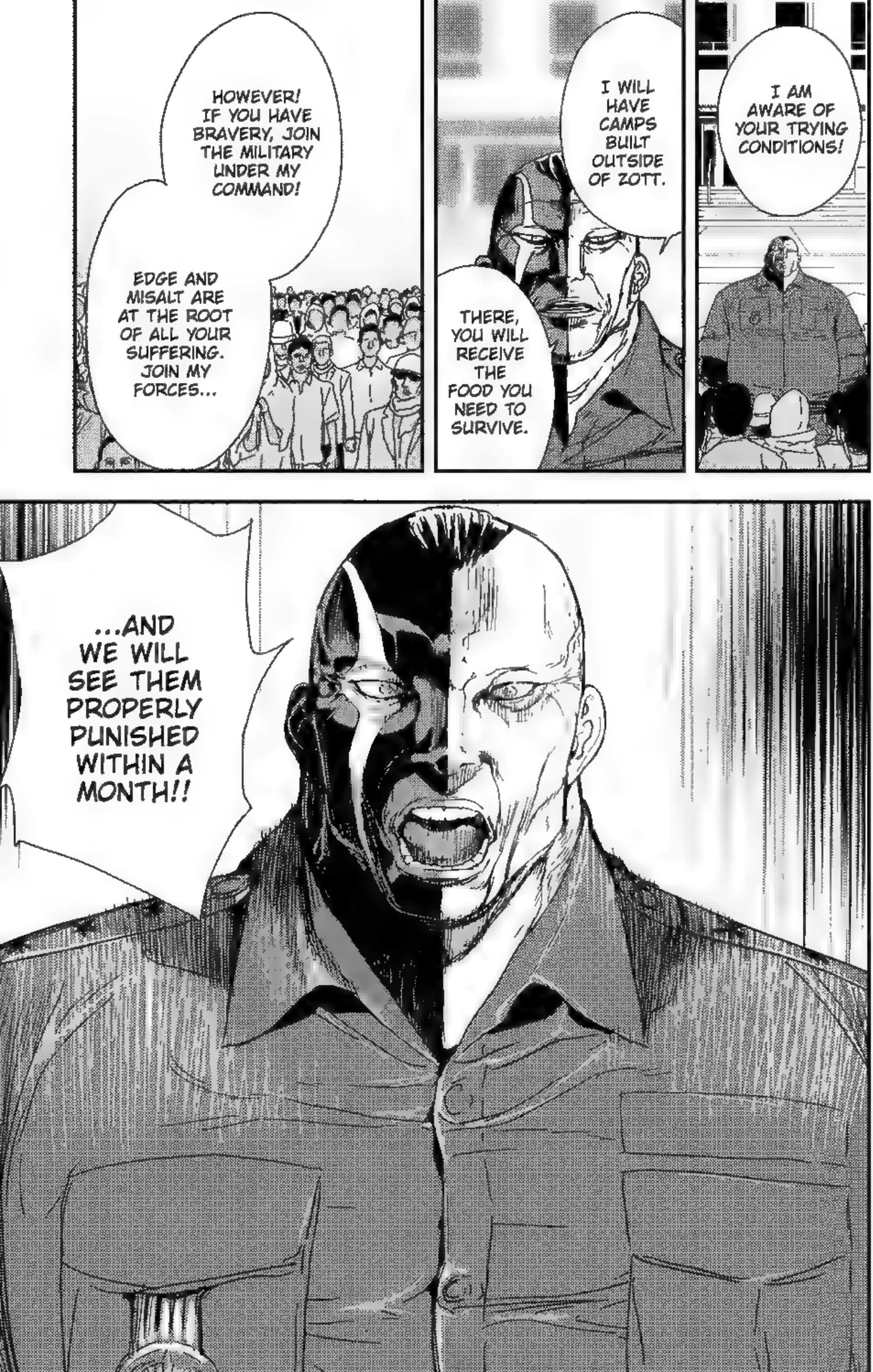

ザッ
ザワ
ZAWA (MURMUR)
ザワ
ZAWA
ザワ
ZAWA
バン
BAN (BOOM)

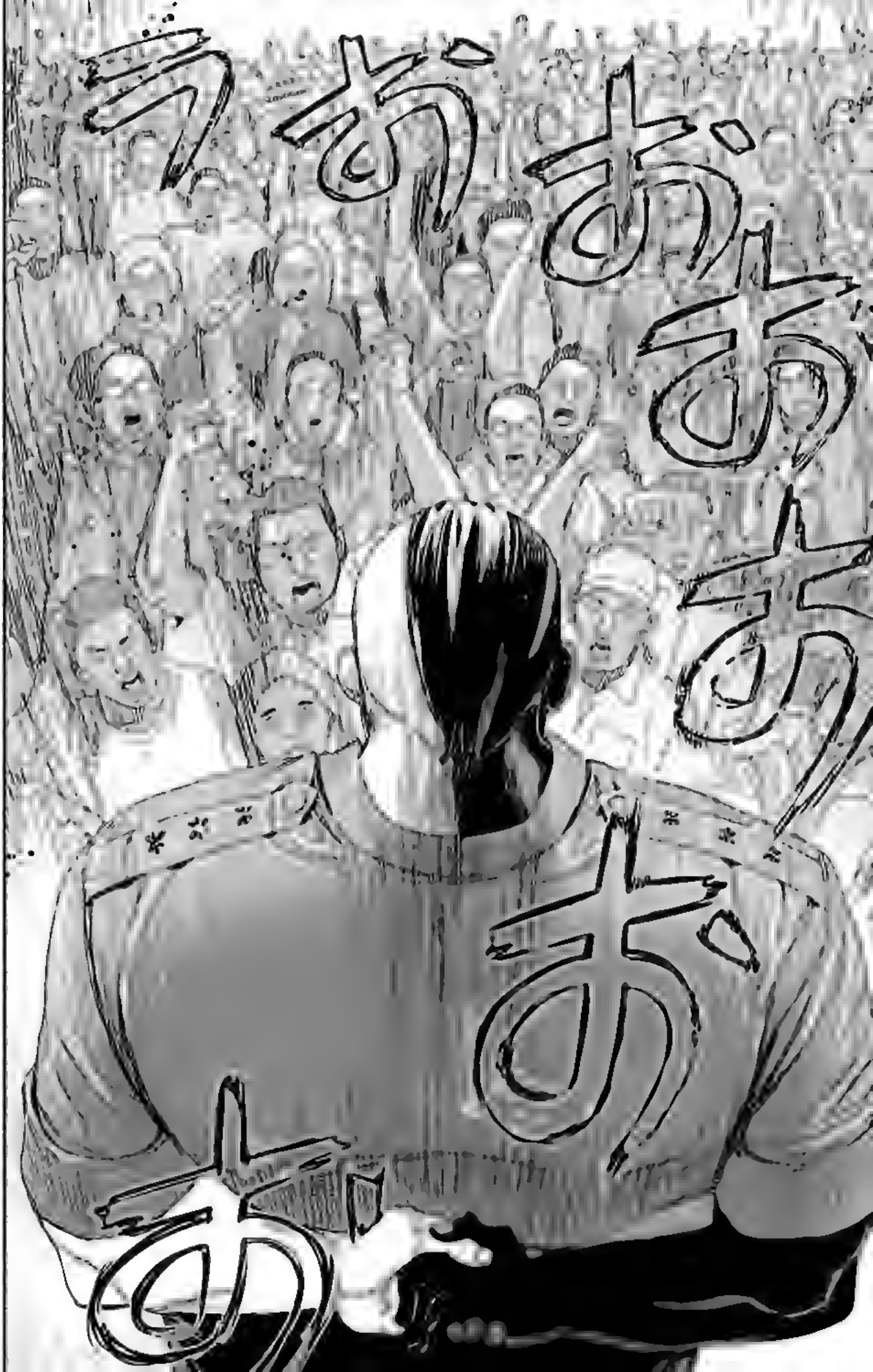

ZASHID...
... TURUS!
OOOO (RAHH)
KUWAO (GRAAH)
バ
バ
バ
バ
BA (THUPPA) BA BA BA
ジジジーッ
JI (ZZZT) JIII

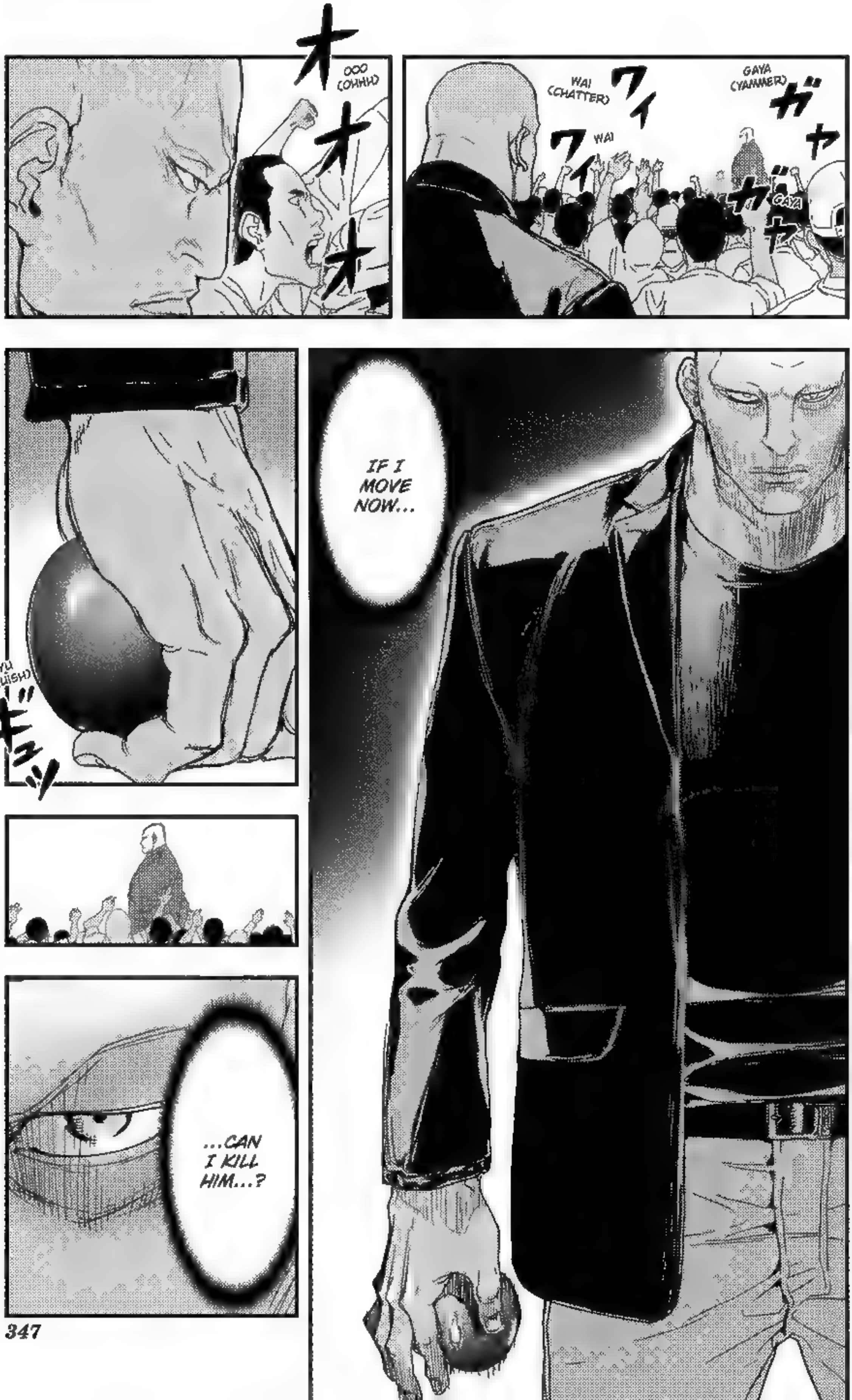

OOOO (OHHH)
ZASHID!
ZASHID!
GUOOOO (GRAHHH)
AOOO (AAAHH)
ooo
ZASHID!
WAAA (RAHHH)

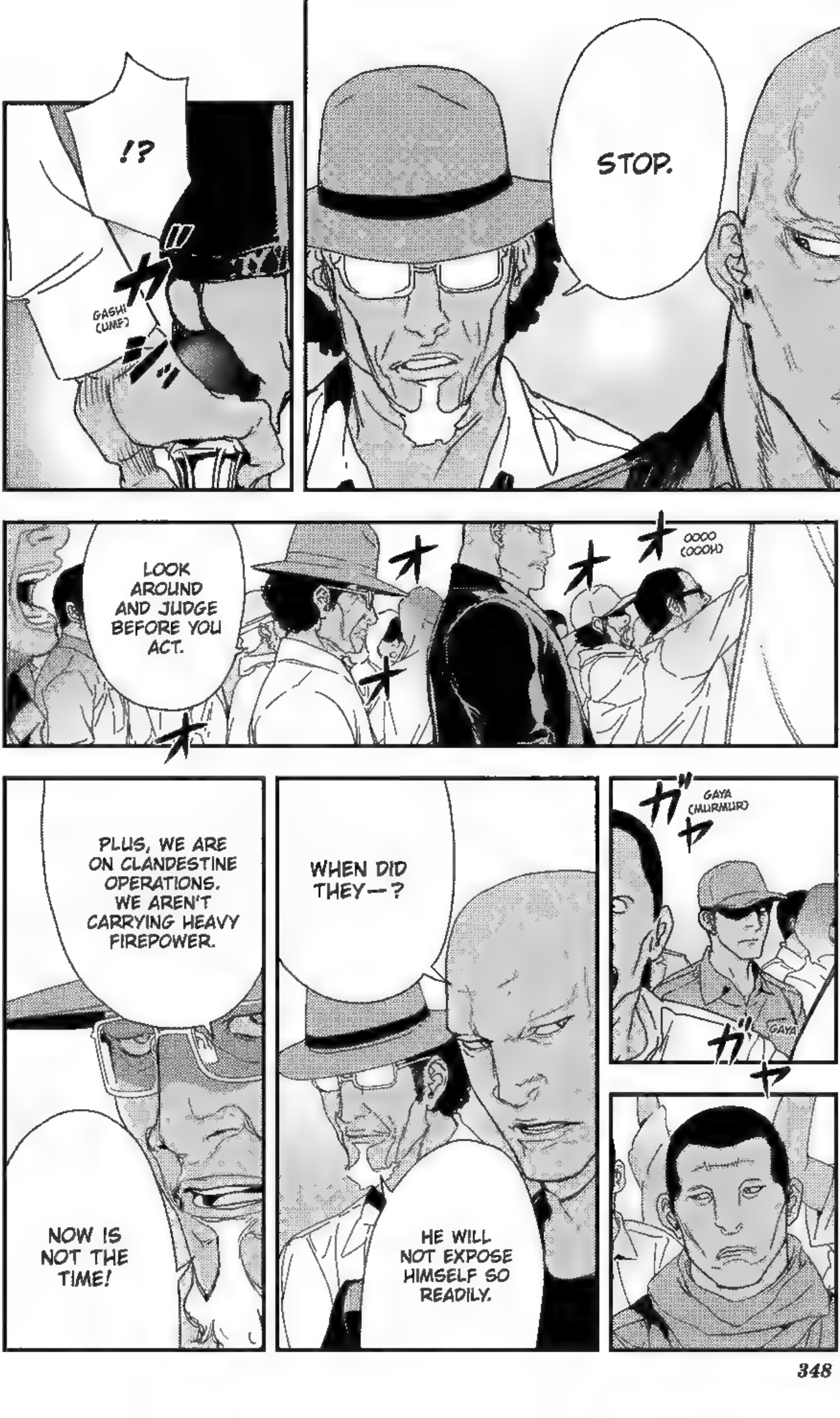

オ
ZASHID!
オ
ZASHID !!
オ
オ
オ
オ
オ
!
..!!
シーーン
INCREDIBLE ..
HE SILENCED THAT ENTIRE CROWD WITHOUT A WORD...

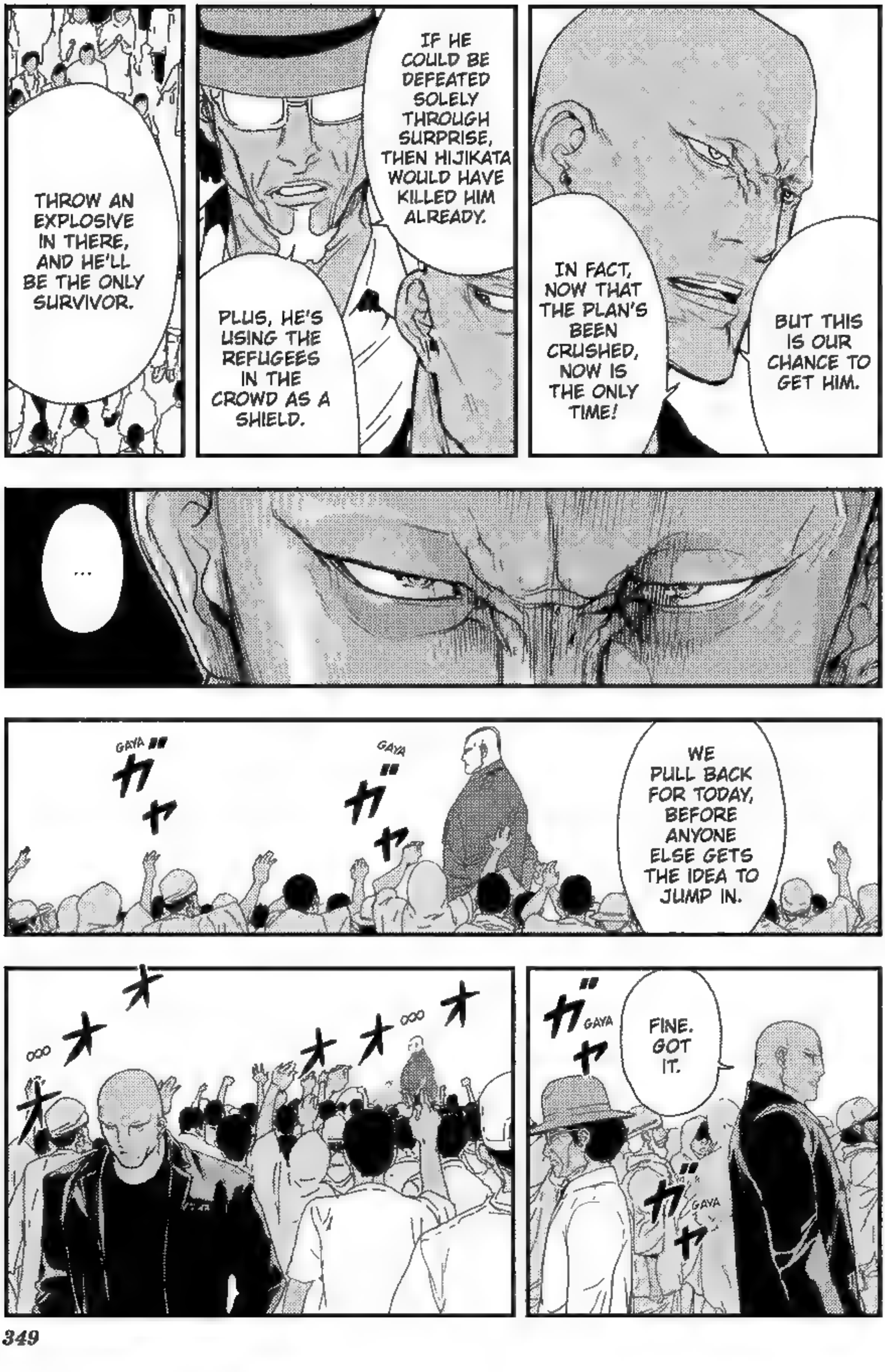

CLOSE-RANGE ATTACKS ARE BLOCKED BY THE CROWD OF CIVILIANS.
SNIPERS ARE A CONCERN, BUT THE PERIMETER GUARDS ARE PERFECTLY LOCATED.
OUR ENEMIES COULD NOT POSSIBLY EXPECT FATHER TO TAKE SUCH A BOLD ACTION.

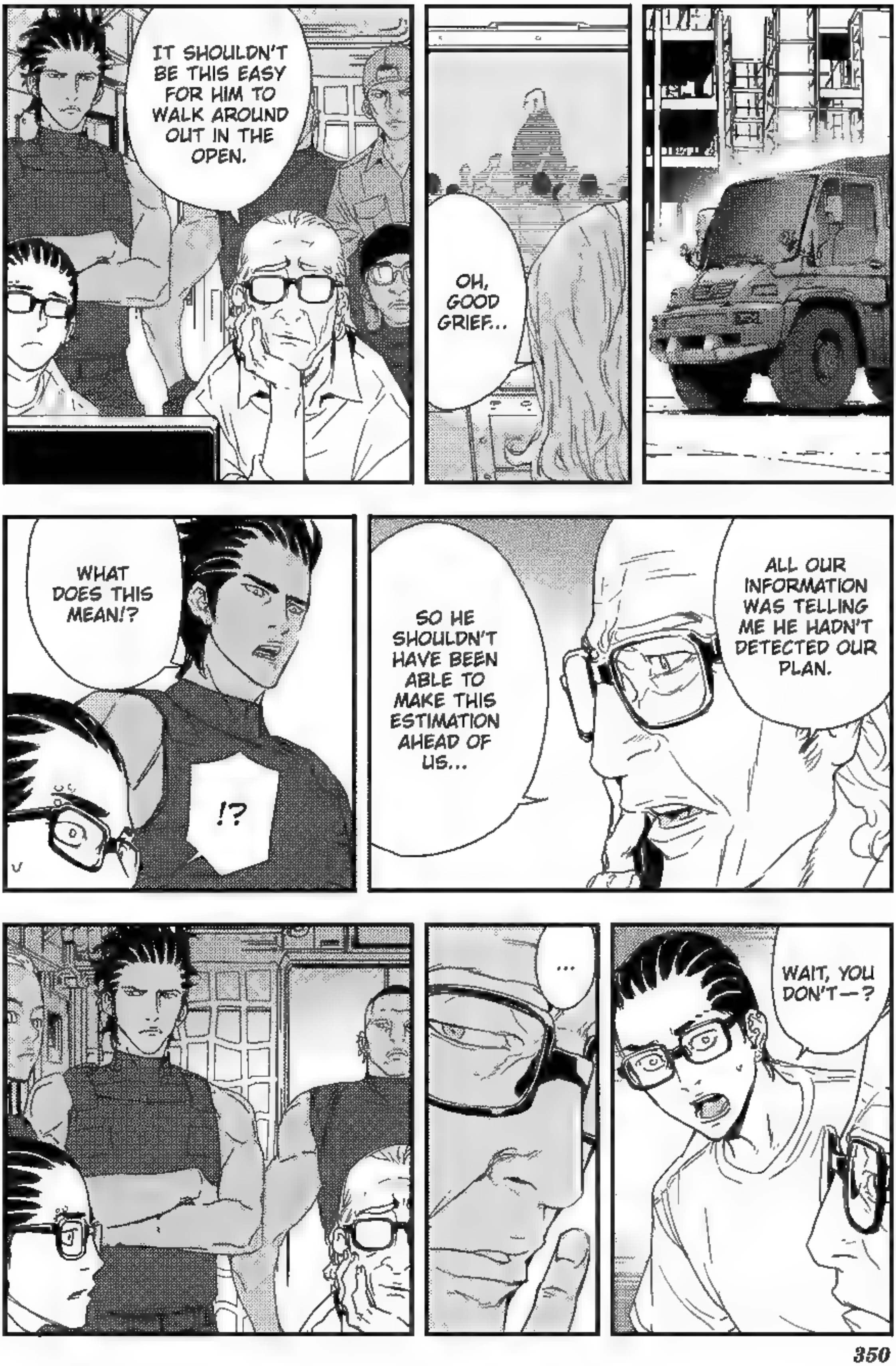

I AM AWARE OF YOUR TRYING CONDITIONS!
I WILL HAVE CAMPS BUILT OUTSIDE OF ZOTT.
THERE, YOU WILL RECEIVE THE FOOD YOU NEED TO SURVIVE.
HOWEVER! IF YOU HAVE BRAVERY, JOIN THE MILITARY UNDER MY COMMAND!
EDGE AND MISALT ARE AT THE ROOT OF ALL YOUR SUFFERING. JOIN MY FORCES...
...AND WE WILL SEE THEM PROPERLY PUNISHED WITHIN A MONTH!!

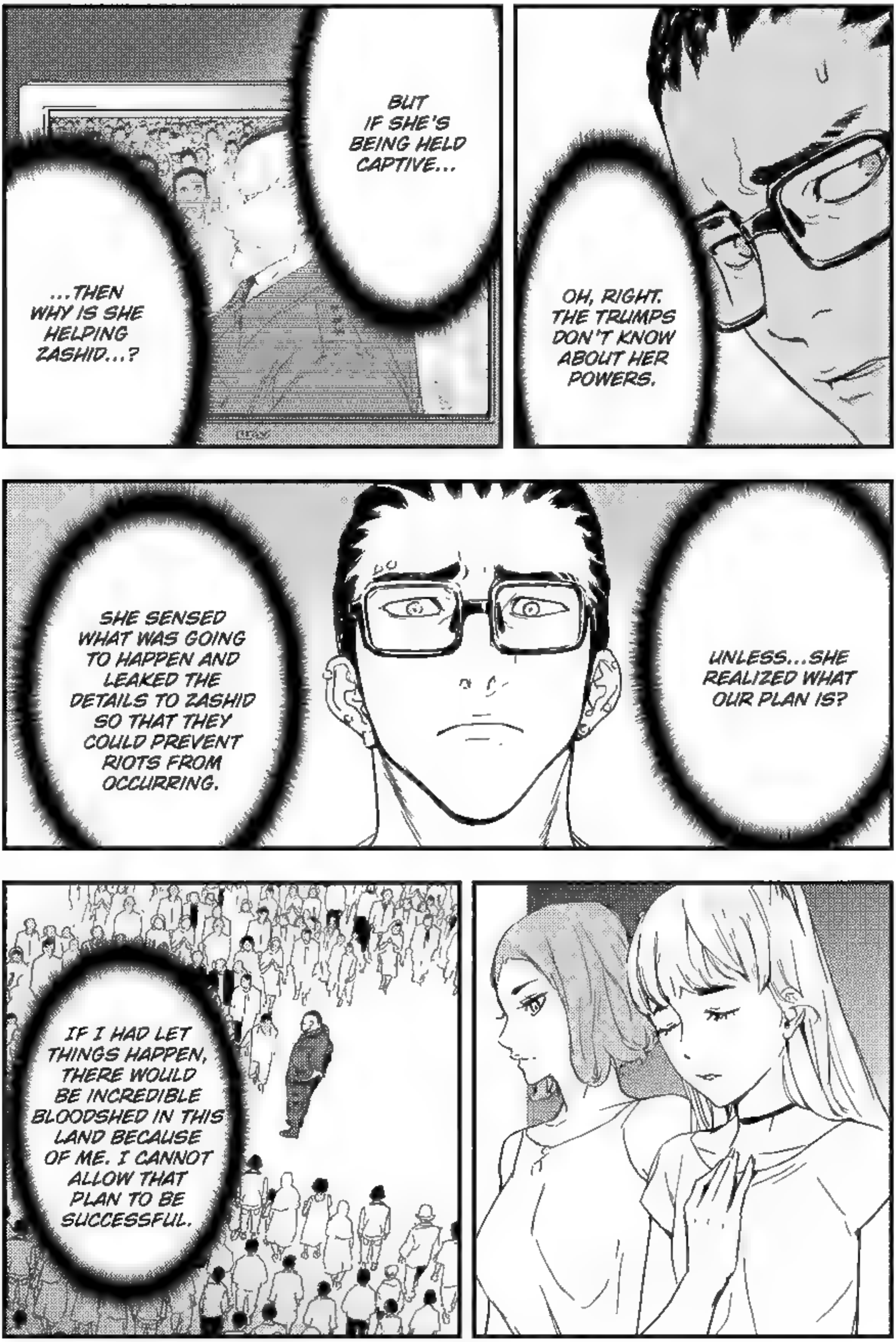

うあ゛おおおおお

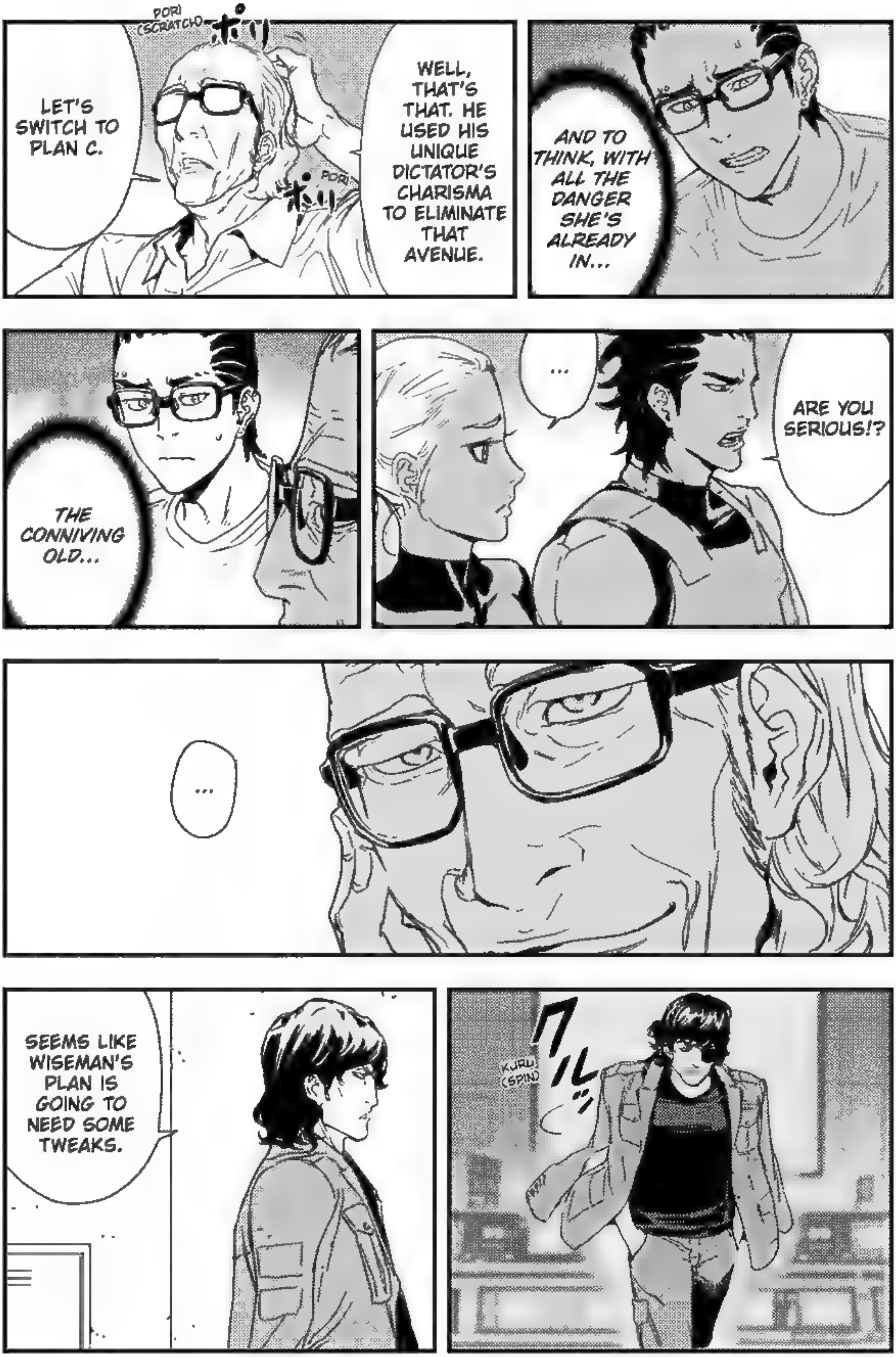

GAYA (YAMMER) ガヤ
GAYA ガヤ
WAI (CHATTER) ワイ
WAI ワイ
OOO (OHHH) オオオ
IF I MOVE NOW...
GYU (SQUISH) ギュッ
...CAN I KILL HIM...?

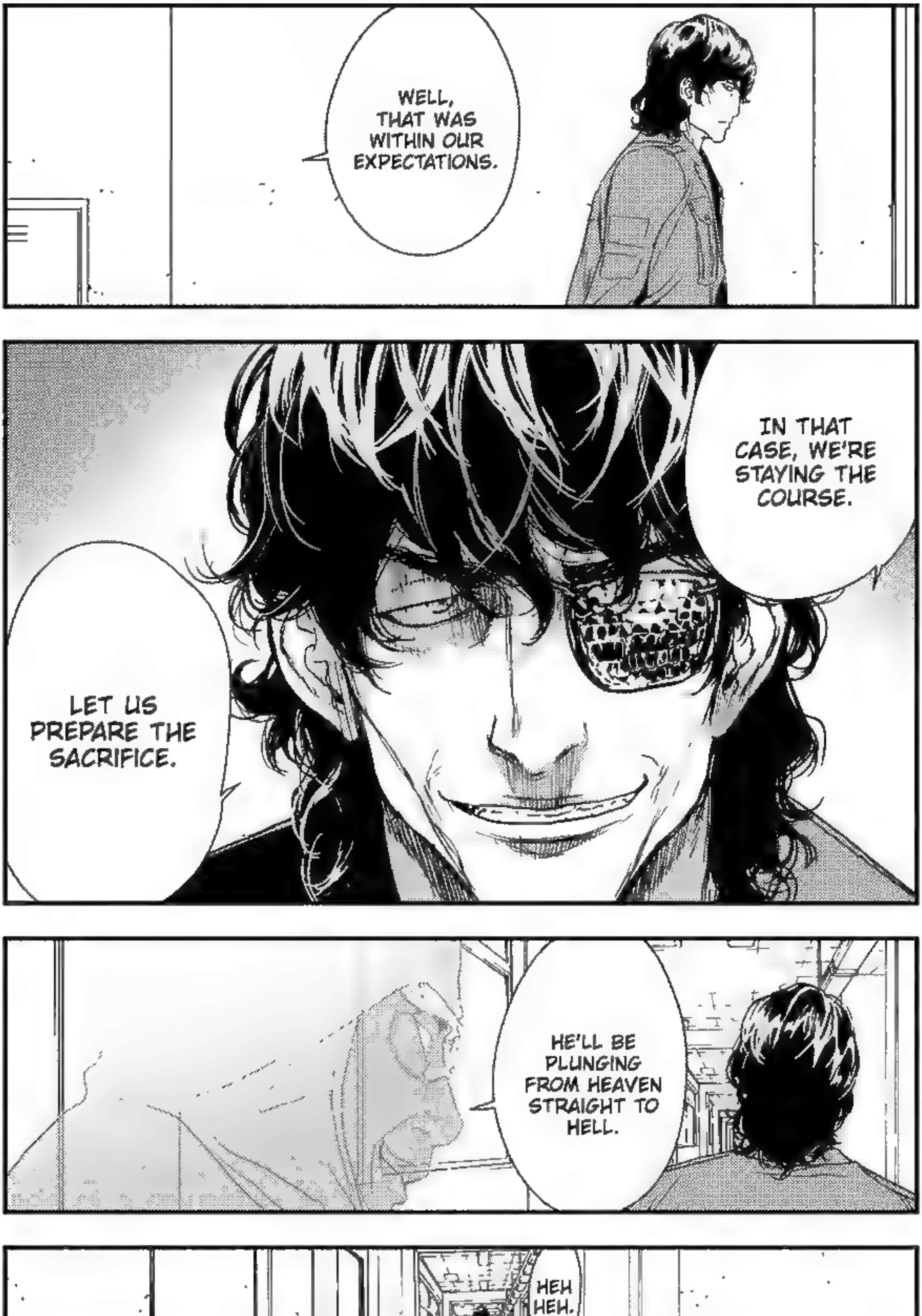

STOP.
!?
GASHI (UMF)
OOOO (OOOH)
LOOK AROUND AND JUDGE BEFORE YOU ACT.
GAYA (MURMUR)
GAYA
WHEN DID THEY—?
HE WILL NOT EXPOSE HIMSELF SO READILY.
PLUS, WE ARE ON CLANDESTINE OPERATIONS. WE AREN'T CARRYING HEAVY FIREPOWER.
NOW IS NOT THE TIME!

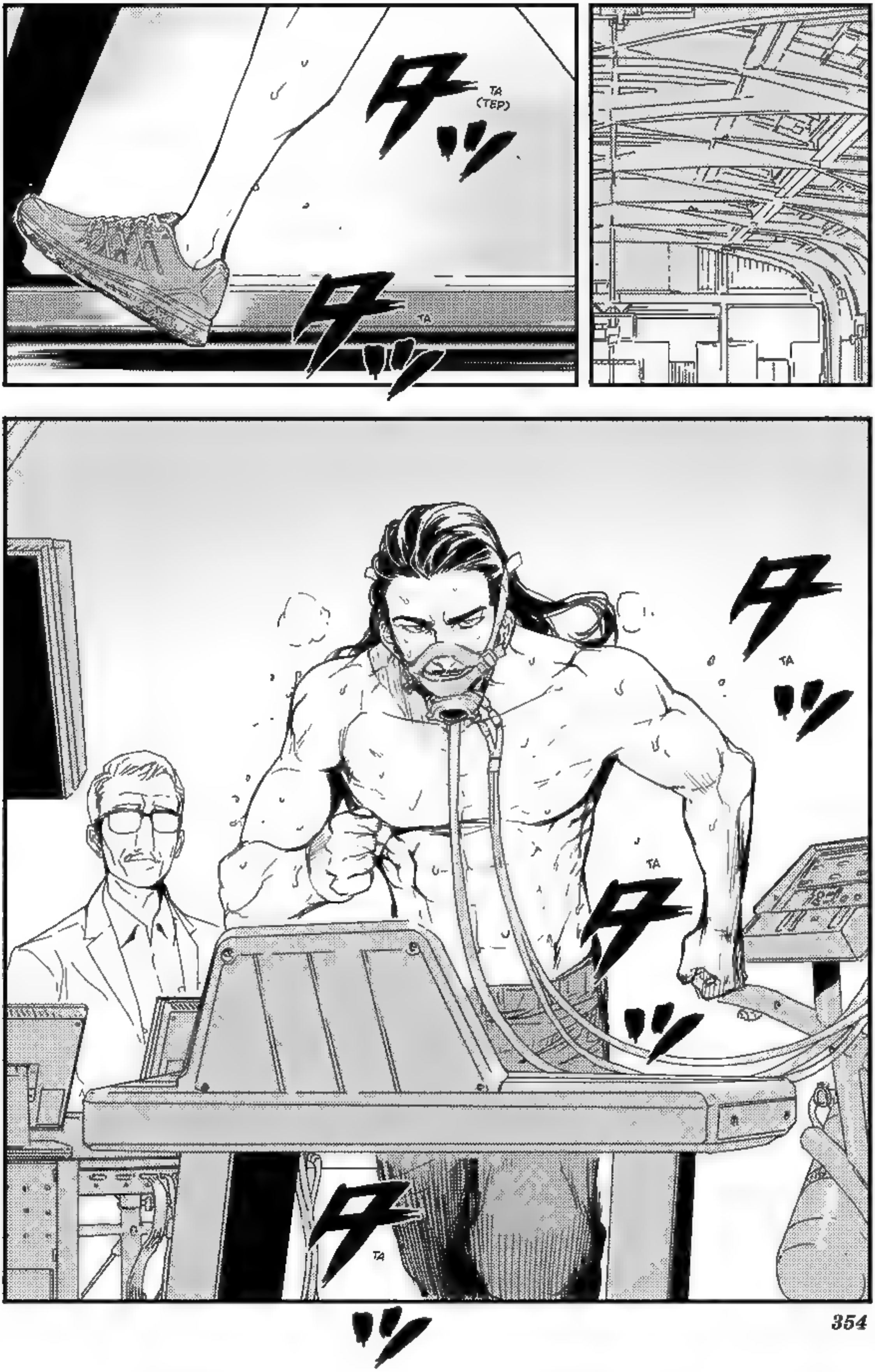

BUT THIS IS OUR CHANCE TO GET HIM.
IN FACT, NOW THAT THE PLAN'S BEEN CRUSHED, NOW IS THE ONLY TIME!
IF HE COULD BE DEFEATED SOLELY THROUGH SURPRISE, THEN HIJIKATA WOULD HAVE KILLED HIM ALREADY.
PLUS, HE'S USING THE REFUGEES IN THE CROWD AS A SHIELD.
THROW AN EXPLOSIVE IN THERE, AND HE'LL BE THE ONLY SURVIVOR.
...
WE PULL BACK FOR TODAY, BEFORE ANYONE ELSE GETS THE IDEA TO JUMP IN.
ガヤ GAYA
ガヤ GAYA
FINE. GOT IT.
ガヤ GAYA
ガヤ GAYA
オオオ OOO
オオオ OOO

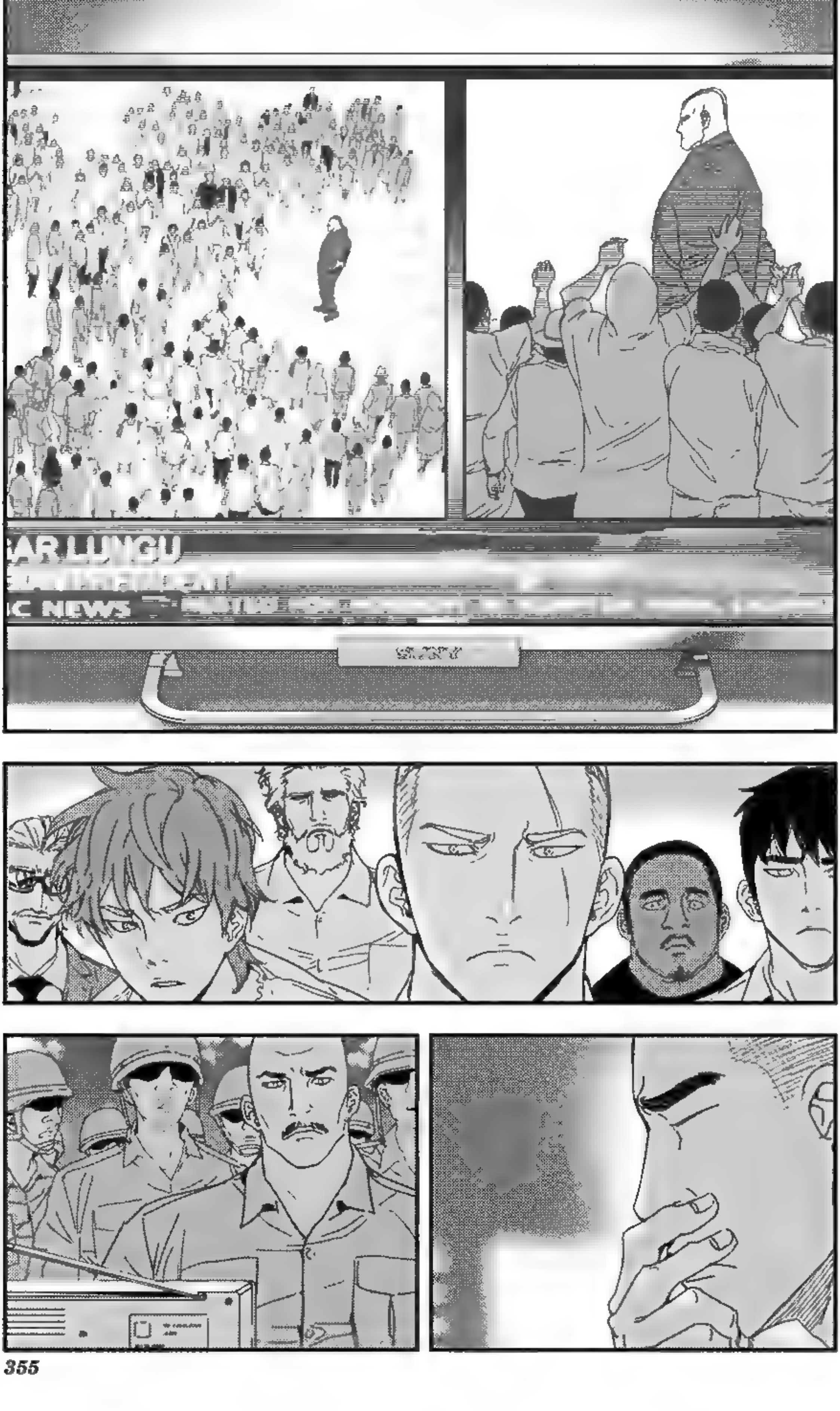

OH, GOOD GRIEF...
IT SHOULDN'T BE THIS EASY FOR HIM TO WALK AROUND OUT IN THE OPEN.
ALL OUR INFORMATION WAS TELLING ME HE HADN'T DETECTED OUR PLAN.
SO HE SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO MAKE THIS ESTIMATION AHEAD OF US...
WHAT DOES THIS MEAN!?
!?
WAIT, YOU DON'T—?
...


OH, RIGHT. THE TRUMPS DON'T KNOW ABOUT HER POWERS.
BUT IF SHE'S BEING HELD CAPTIVE...
...THEN WHY IS SHE HELPING ZASHID...?
UNLESS...SHE REALIZED WHAT OUR PLAN IS?
SHE SENSED WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN AND LEAKED THE DETAILS TO ZASHID SO THAT THEY COULD PREVENT RIOTS FROM OCCURRING.
IF I HAD LET THINGS HAPPEN, THERE WOULD BE INCREDIBLE BLOODSHED IN THIS LAND BECAUSE OF ME. I CANNOT ALLOW THAT PLAN TO BE SUCCESSFUL.

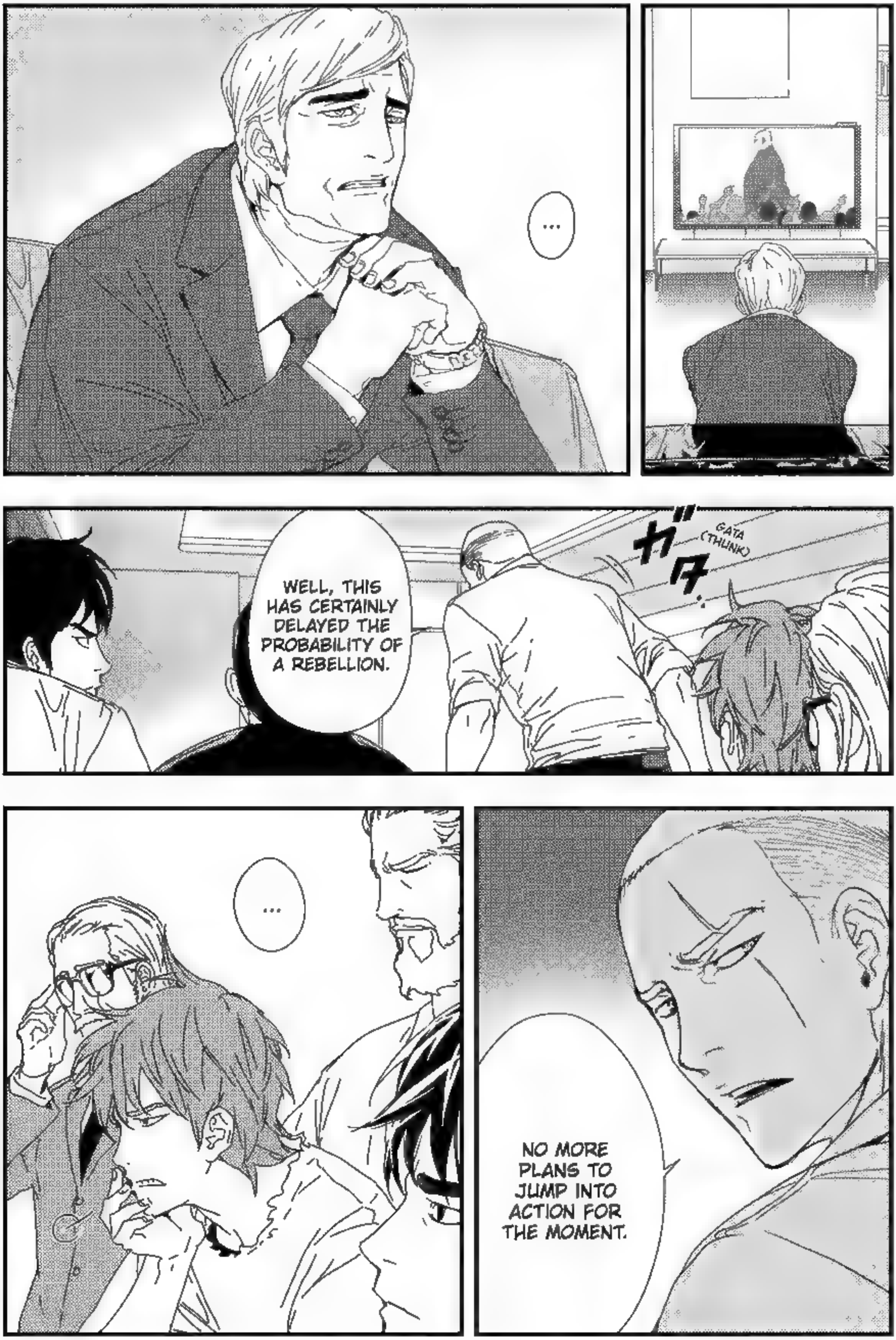

ポリ
PORI (SCRATCH)
WELL, THAT'S THAT. HE USED HIS UNIQUE DICTATOR'S CHARISMA TO ELIMINATE THAT AVENUE.
ポリ
PORI
LET'S SWITCH TO PLAN C.
AND TO THINK, WITH ALL THE DANGER SHE'S ALREADY IN...
THE CONNIVING OLD...
ARE YOU SERIOUS!?
...
...
SEEMS LIKE WISEMAN'S PLAN IS GOING TO NEED SOME TWEAKS.
クル
KURU (SPIN)

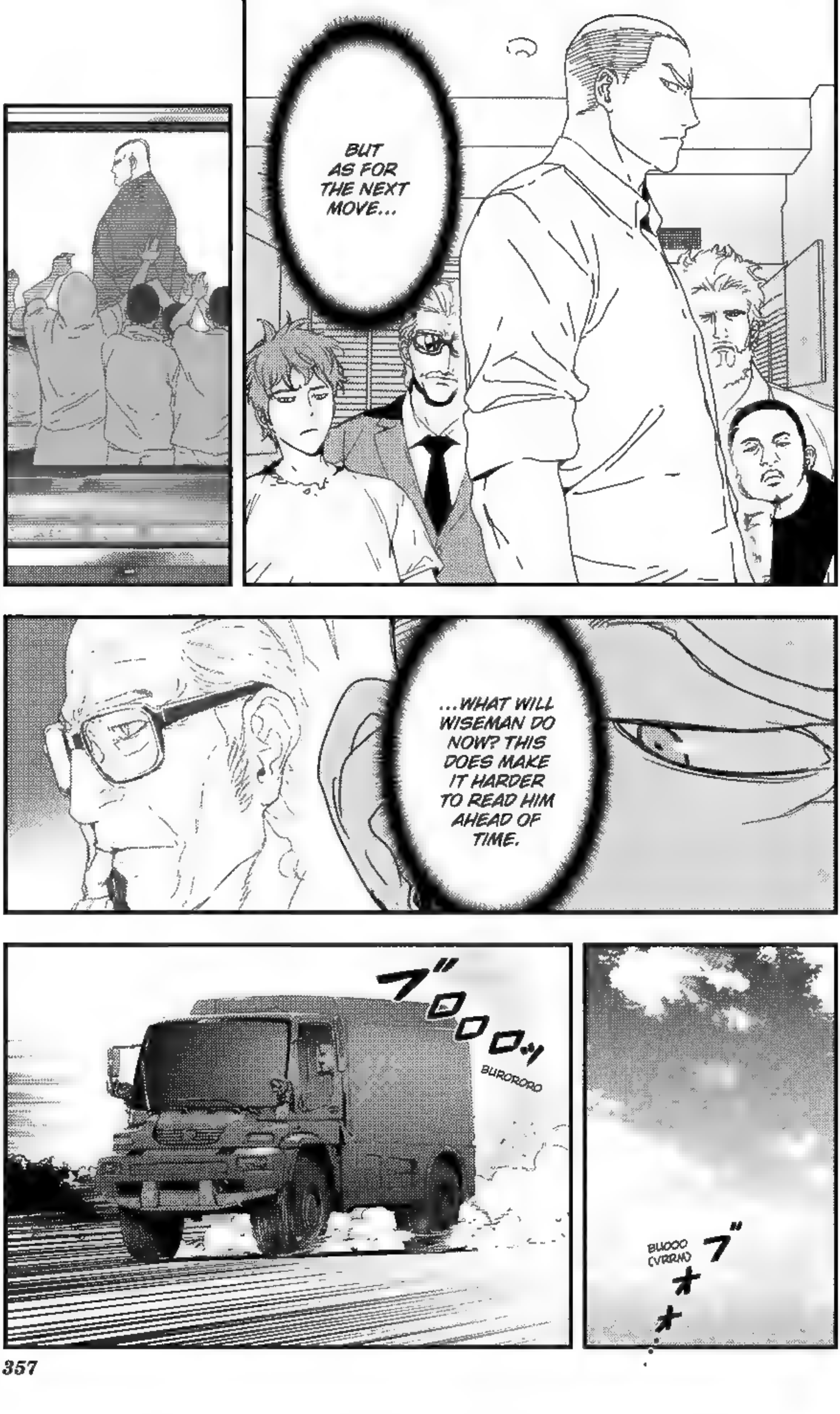

WELL, THAT WAS WITHIN OUR EXPECTATIONS.
IN THAT CASE, WE'RE STAYING THE COURSE.
LET US PREPARE THE SACRIFICE.
HE'LL BE PLUNGING FROM HEAVEN STRAIGHT TO HELL.
HEH HEH.


タッ
TA
(TEP)
タッ
TA
タッ
TA
タッ
TA
タッ
TA

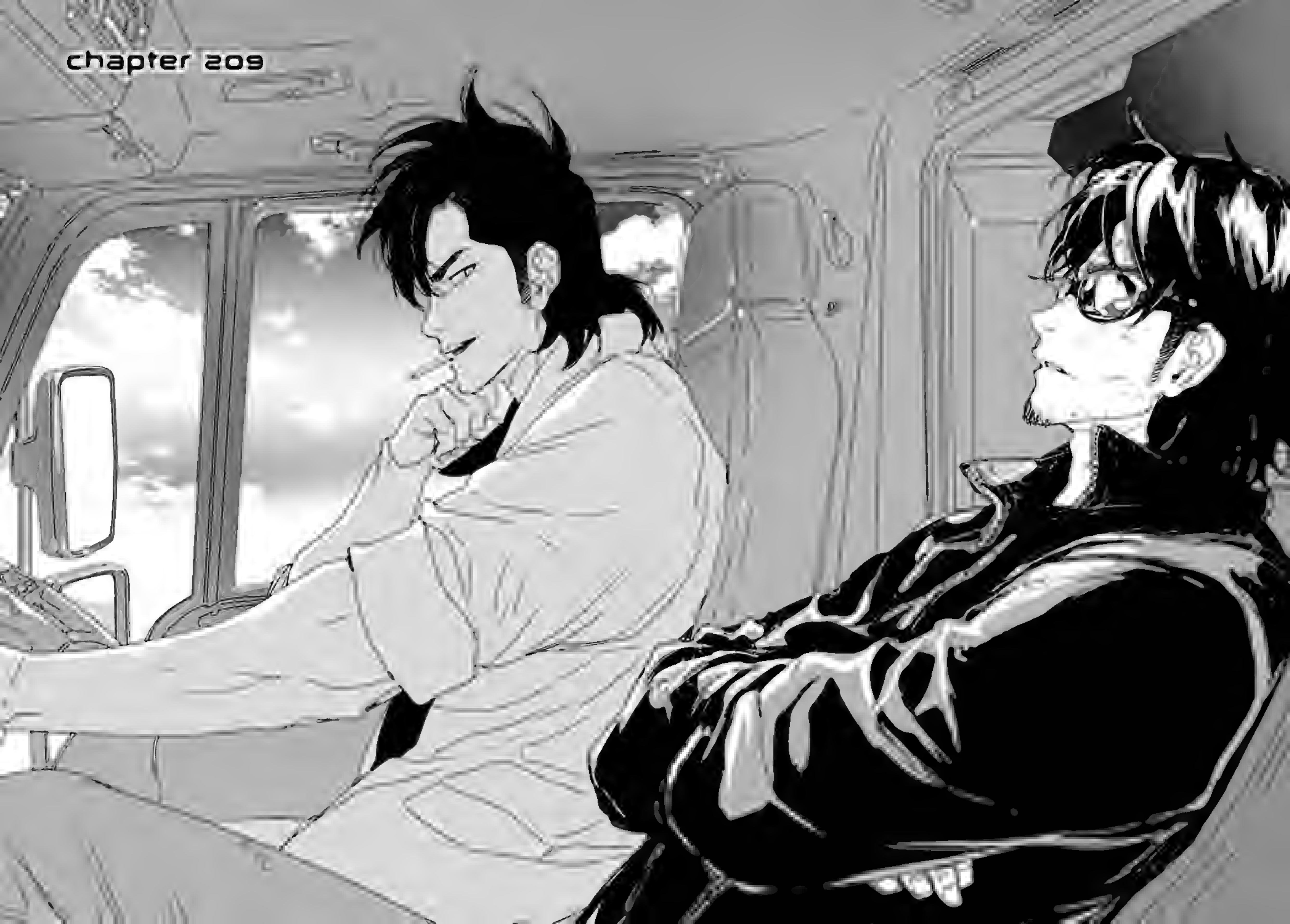


AR LUNGU
C NEWS

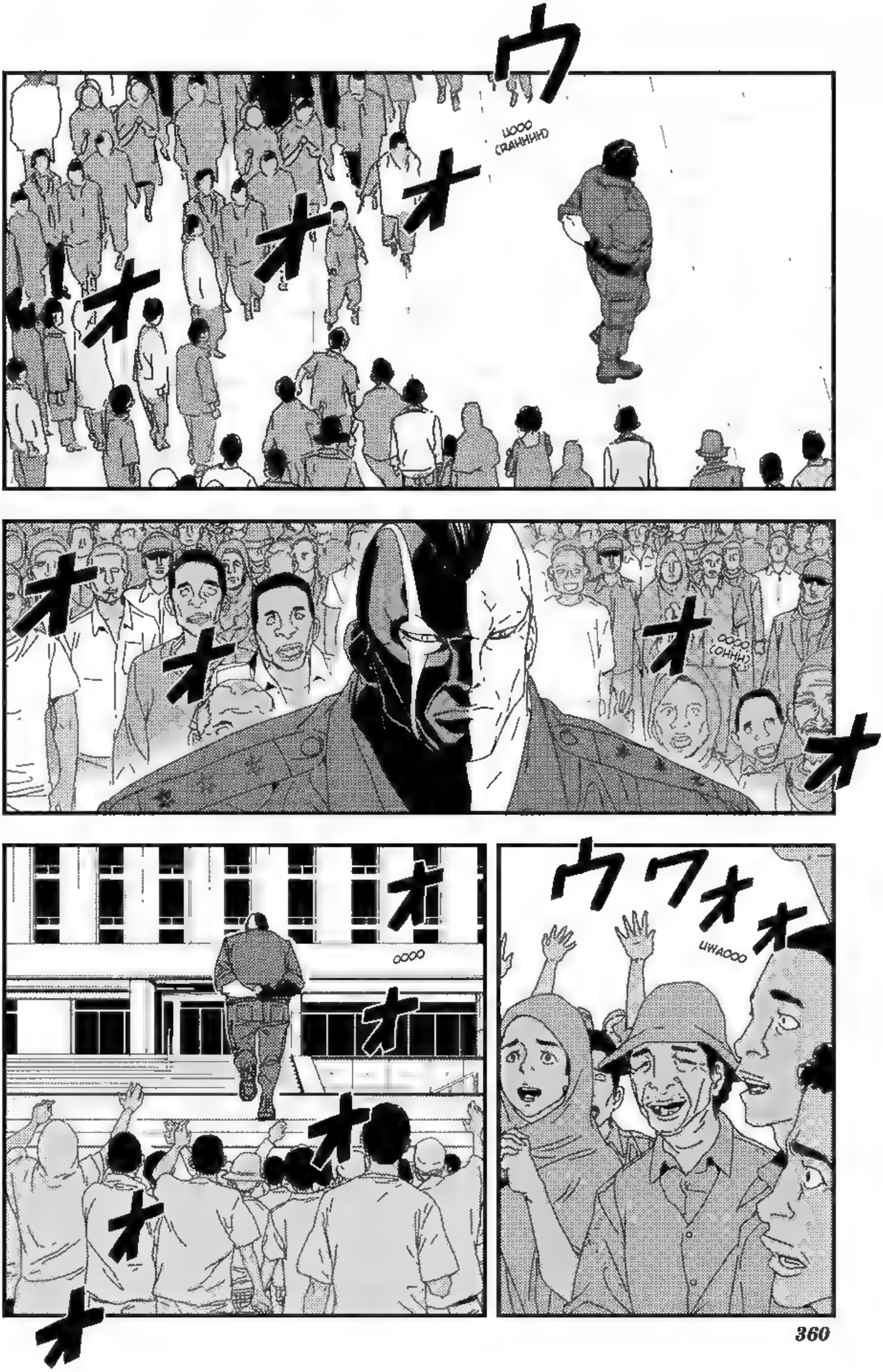

...
ガタ
GATA (THUNK)
WELL, THIS HAS CERTAINLY DELAYED THE PROBABILITY OF A REBELLION.
NO MORE PLANS TO JUMP INTO ACTION FOR THE MOMENT.
...

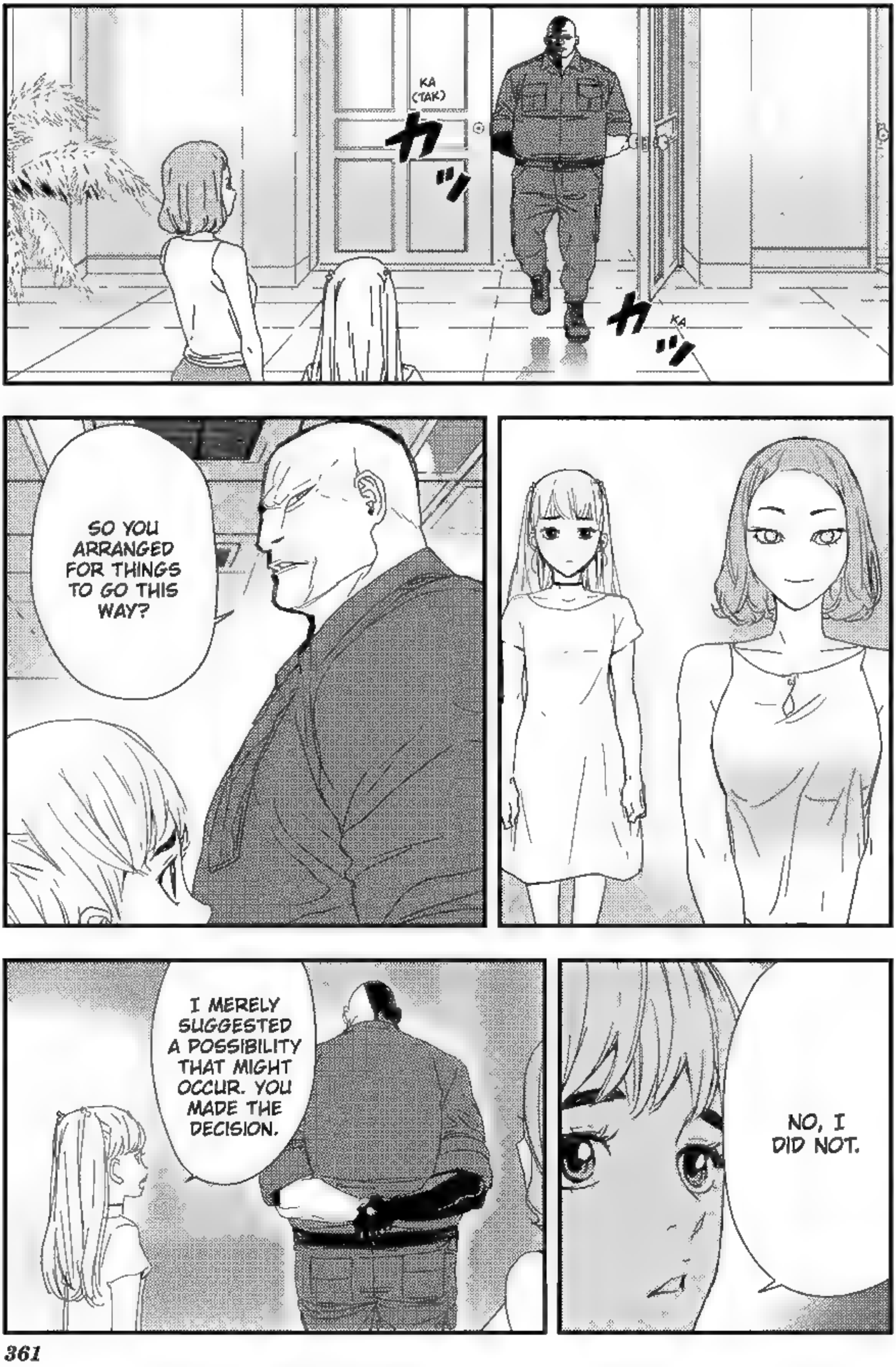

BUT AS FOR THE NEXT MOVE...
...WHAT WILL WISEMAN DO NOW? THIS DOES MAKE IT HARDER TO READ HIM AHEAD OF TIME.
ブオォ…
BUOOO (VRRM)
ブロロロッ
BURORORO

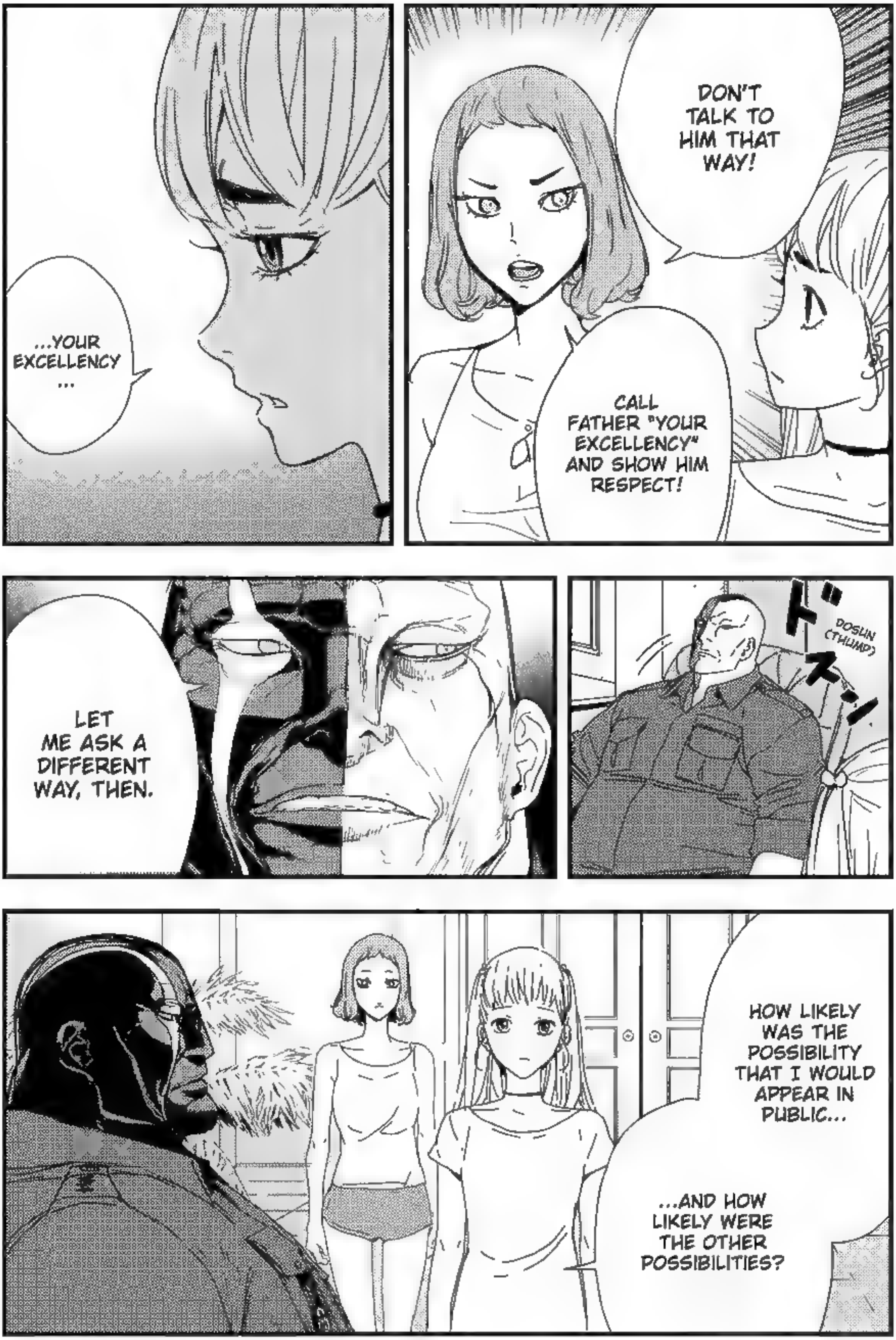
chapter 209

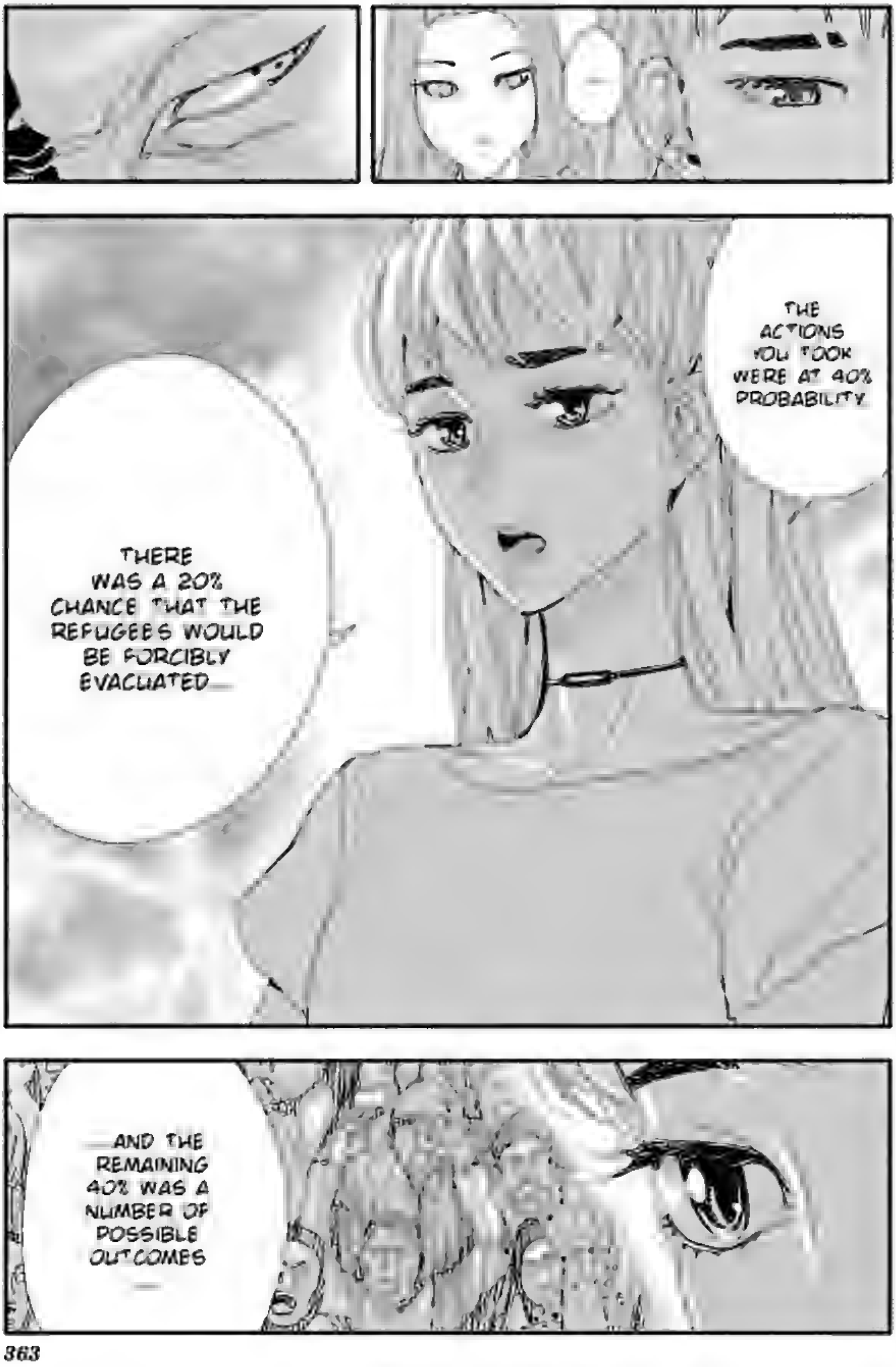


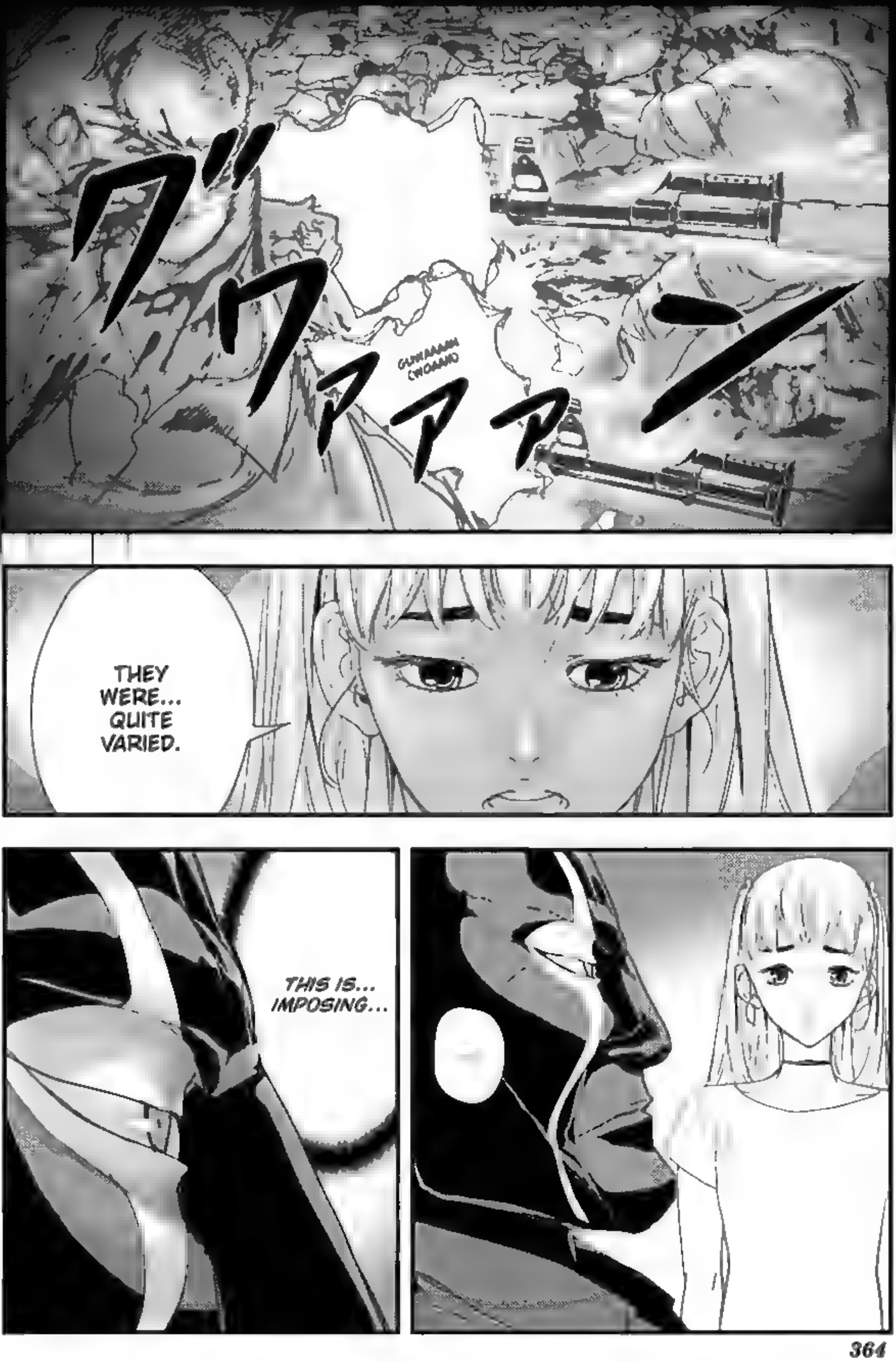
chapter 209

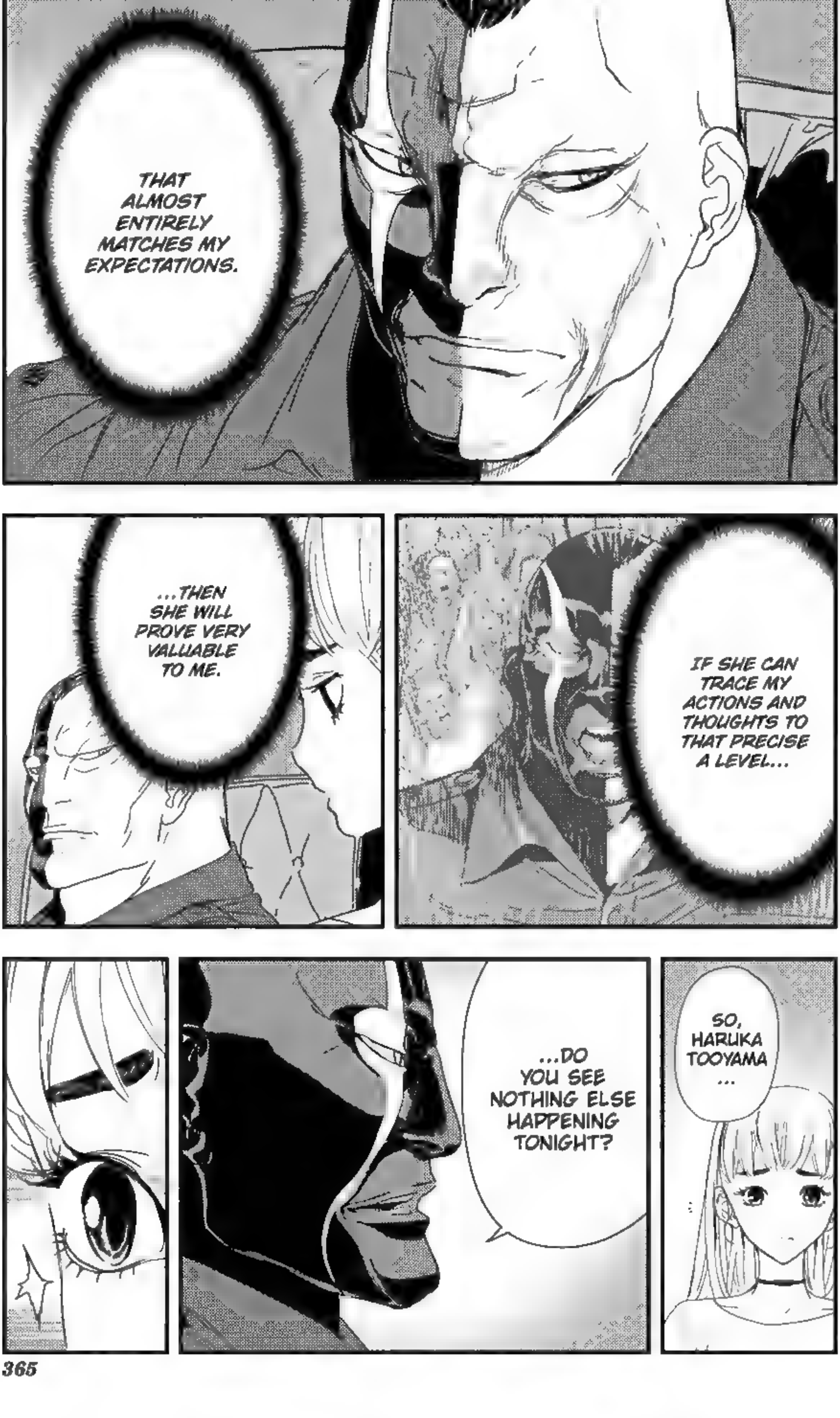

ウオオオ
UOOO (RAHHHH)
オオオオ
OOOO (OHHH)
ウワオオ
UWAOOO
オオオオオ
OOOO

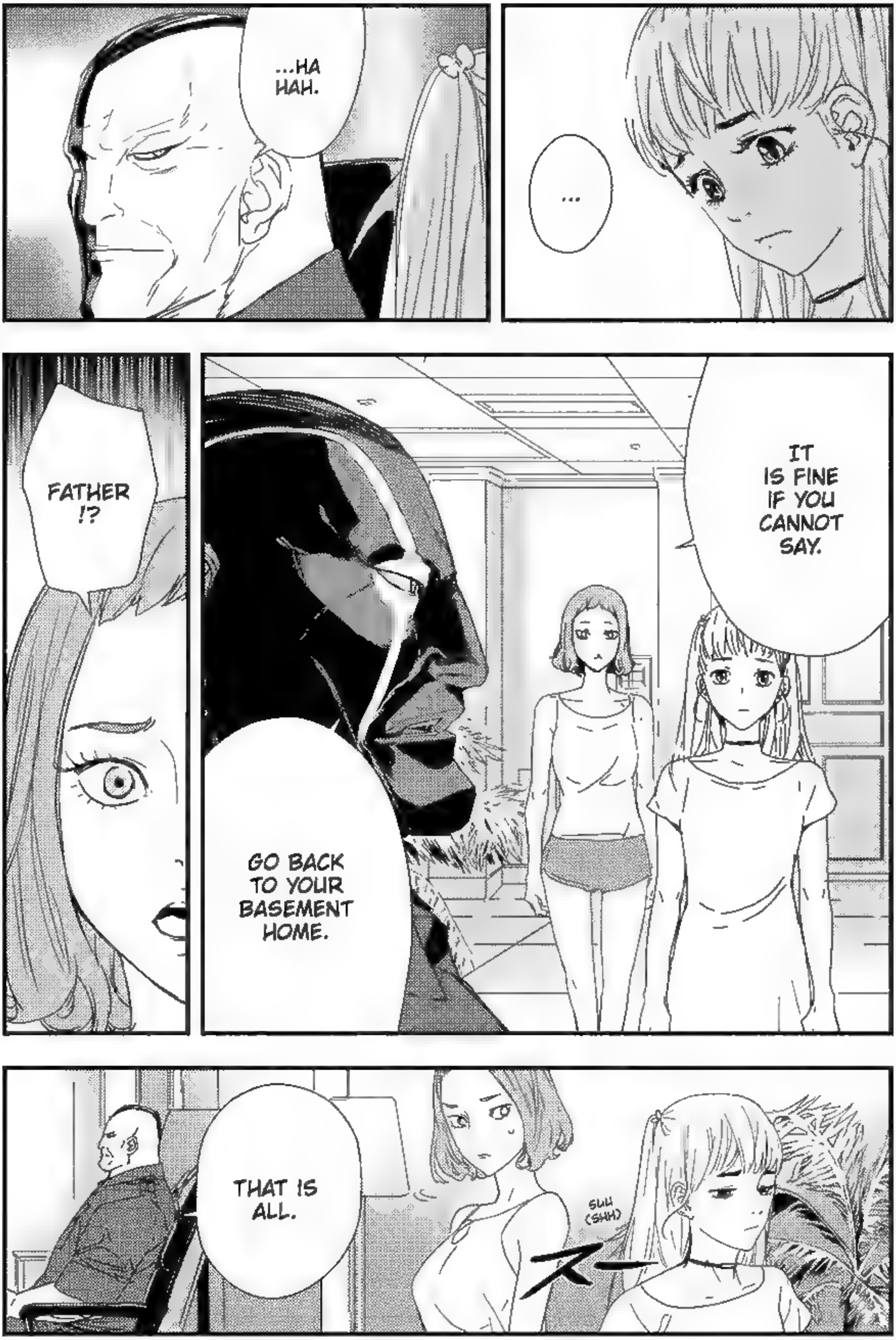

KA (TAK)
カッ
カッ
KA
SO YOU ARRANGED FOR THINGS TO GO THIS WAY?
I MERELY SUGGESTED A POSSIBILITY THAT MIGHT OCCUR. YOU MADE THE DECISION.
NO, I DID NOT.

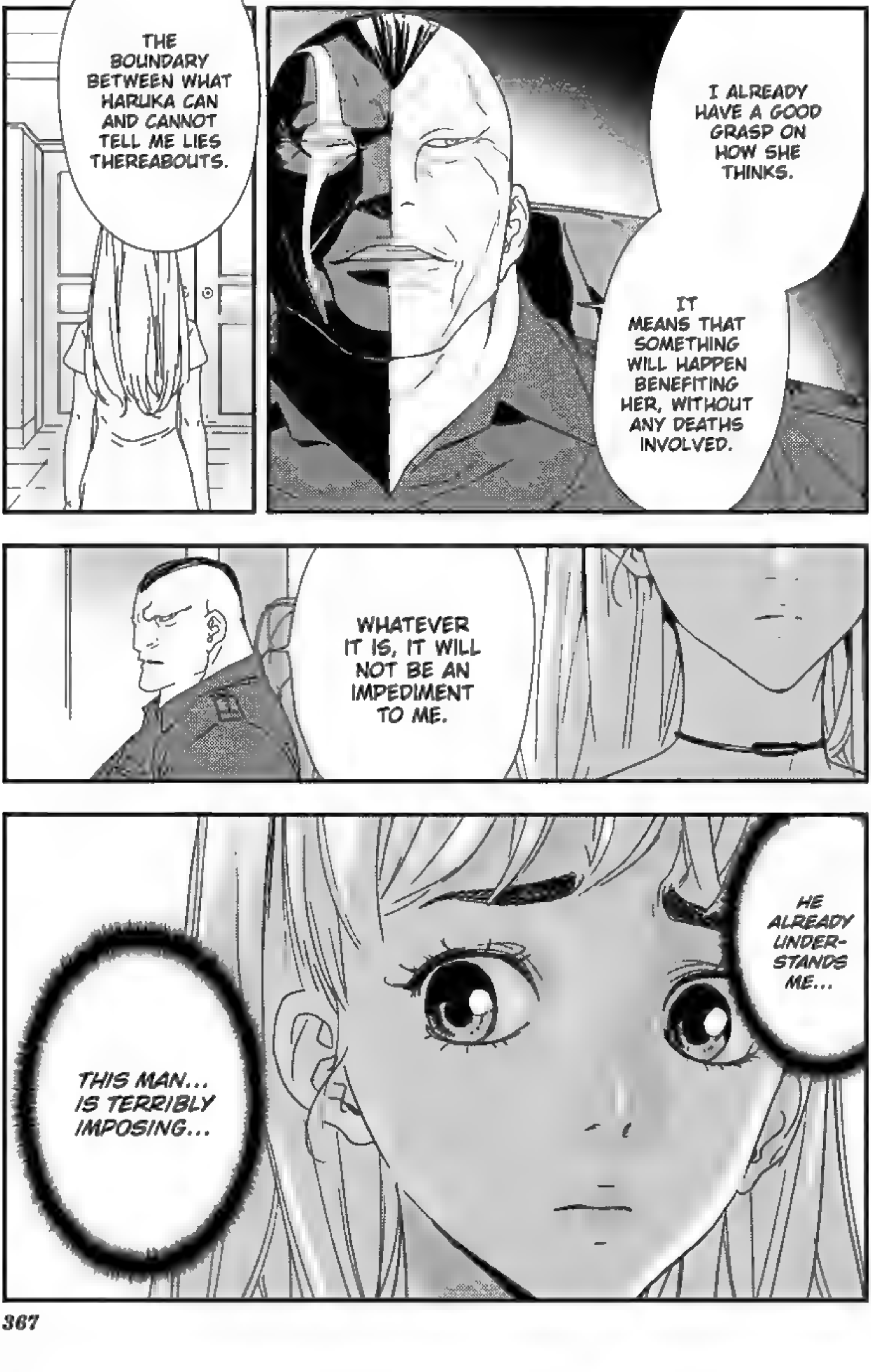

DON'T TALK TO HIM THAT WAY!
CALL FATHER "YOUR EXCELLENCY" AND SHOW HIM RESPECT!
...YOUR EXCELLENCY ...
ドスン!
DOSUN (THUMP)
LET ME ASK A DIFFERENT WAY, THEN.
HOW LIKELY WAS THE POSSIBILITY THAT I WOULD APPEAR IN PUBLIC...
...AND HOW LIKELY WERE THE OTHER POSSIBILITIES?

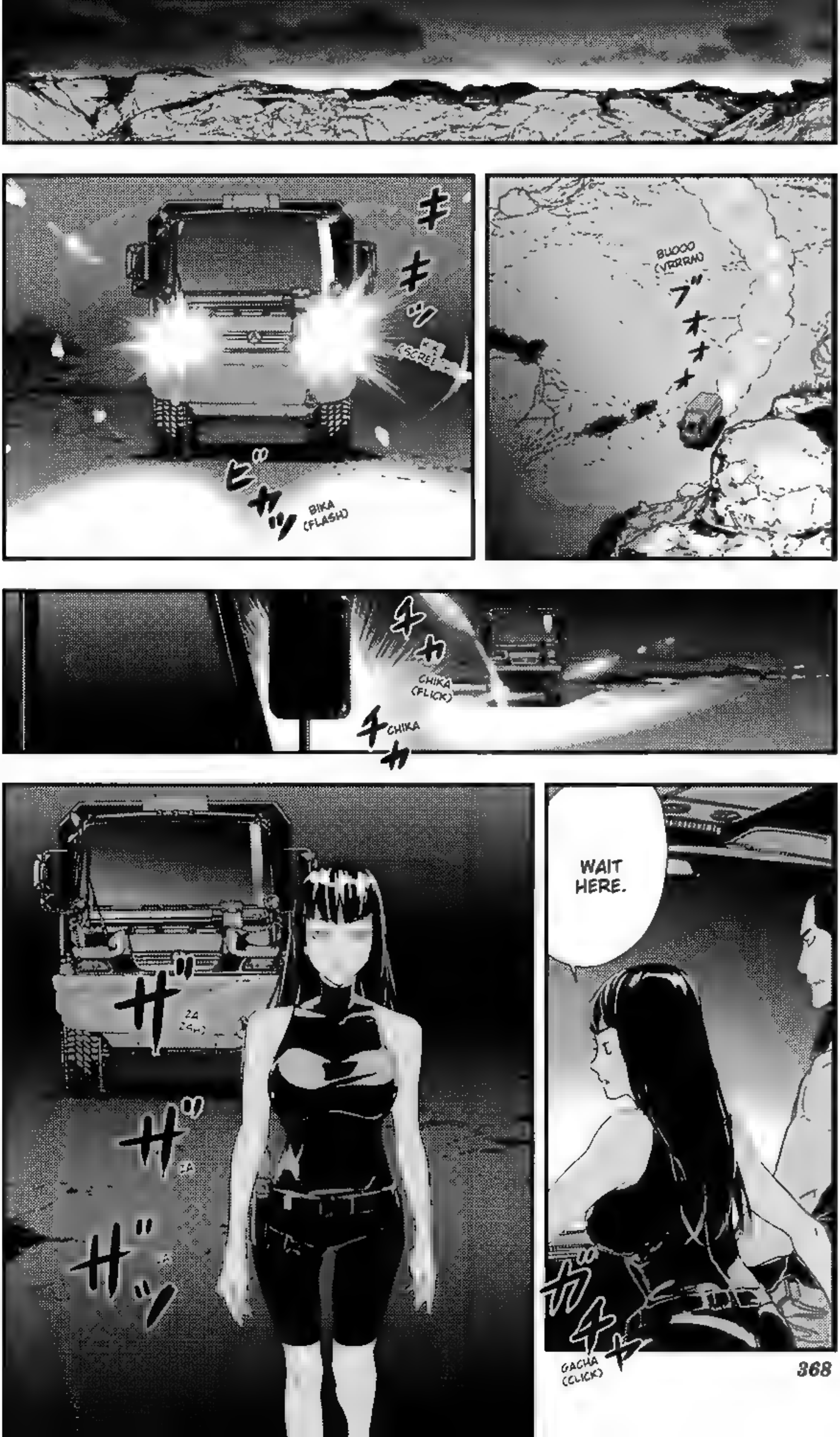

THE ACTIONS YOU TOOK WERE AT 40% PROBABILITY.
THERE WAS A 20% CHANCE THAT THE REFUGEES WOULD BE FORCIBLY EVACUATED...
...AND THE REMAINING 40% WAS A NUMBER OF POSSIBLE OUTCOMES —

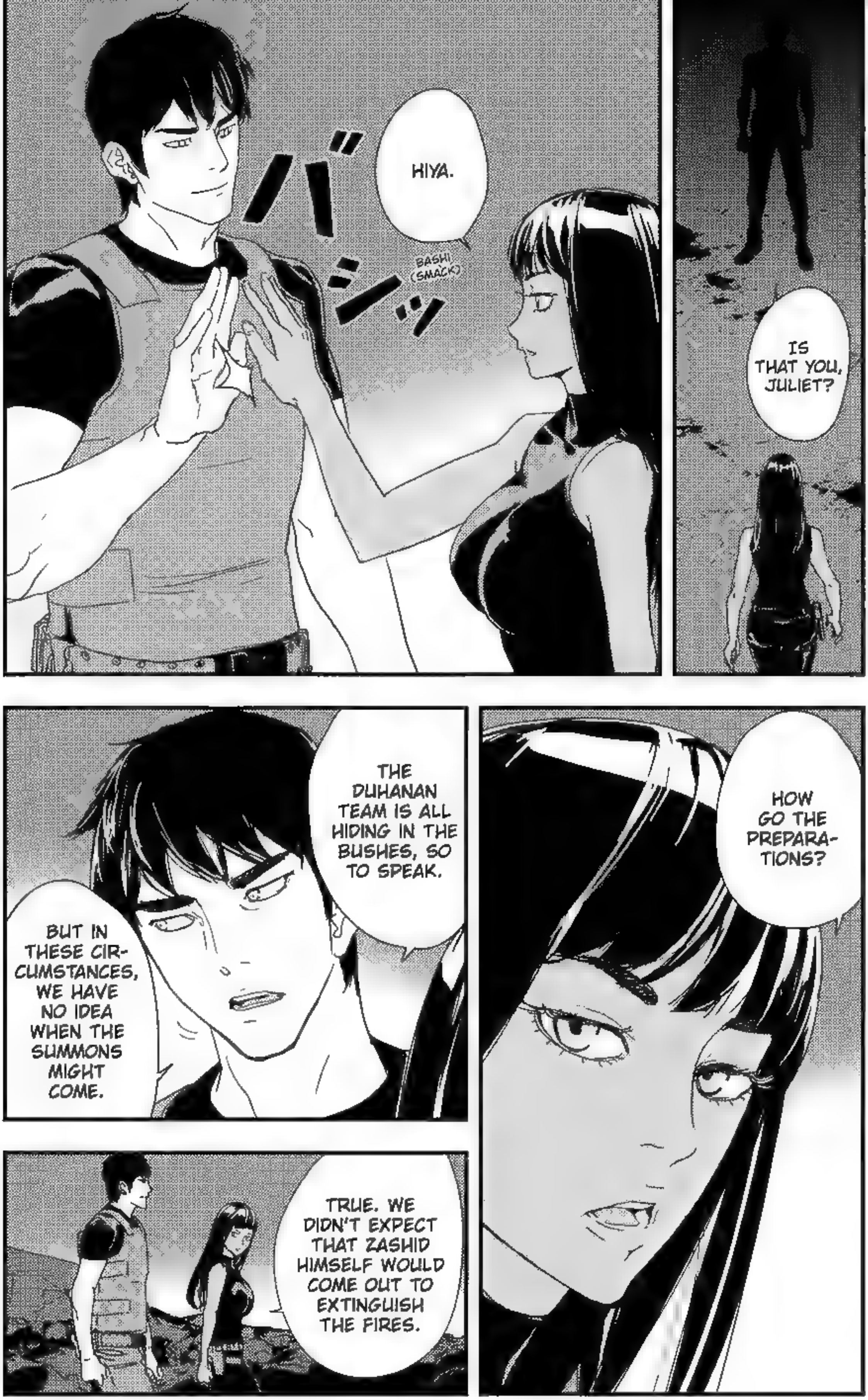

グヮァァァーン
GUWAAAAN (WOAAH)
THEY WERE... QUITE VARIED.
THIS IS... IMPOSING...

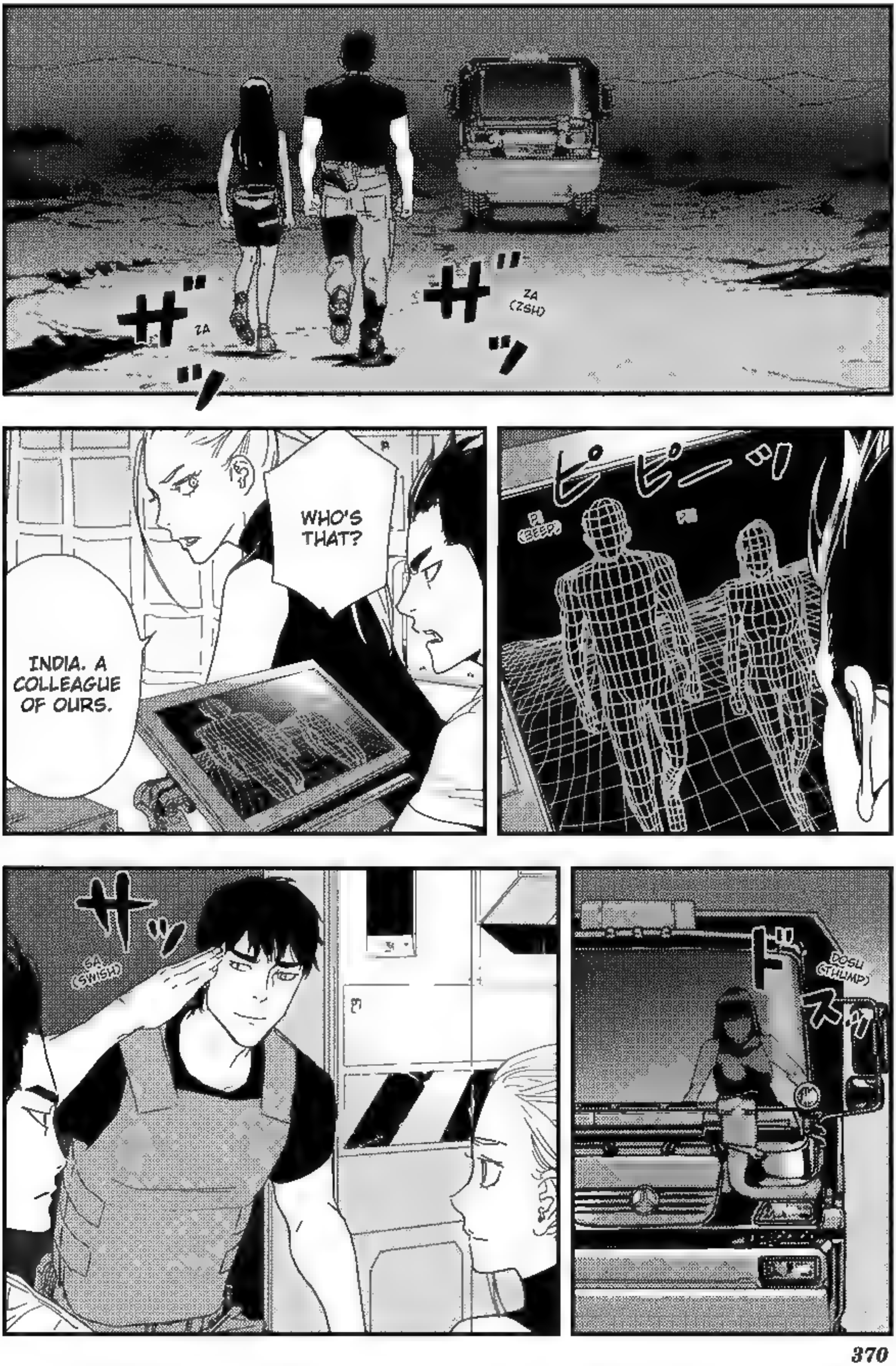

THAT ALMOST ENTIRELY MATCHES MY EXPECTATIONS.
IF SHE CAN TRACE MY ACTIONS AND THOUGHTS TO THAT PRECISE A LEVEL...
...THEN SHE WILL PROVE VERY VALUABLE TO ME.
SO, HARUKA TOOYAMA ...
...DO YOU SEE NOTHING ELSE HAPPENING TONIGHT?

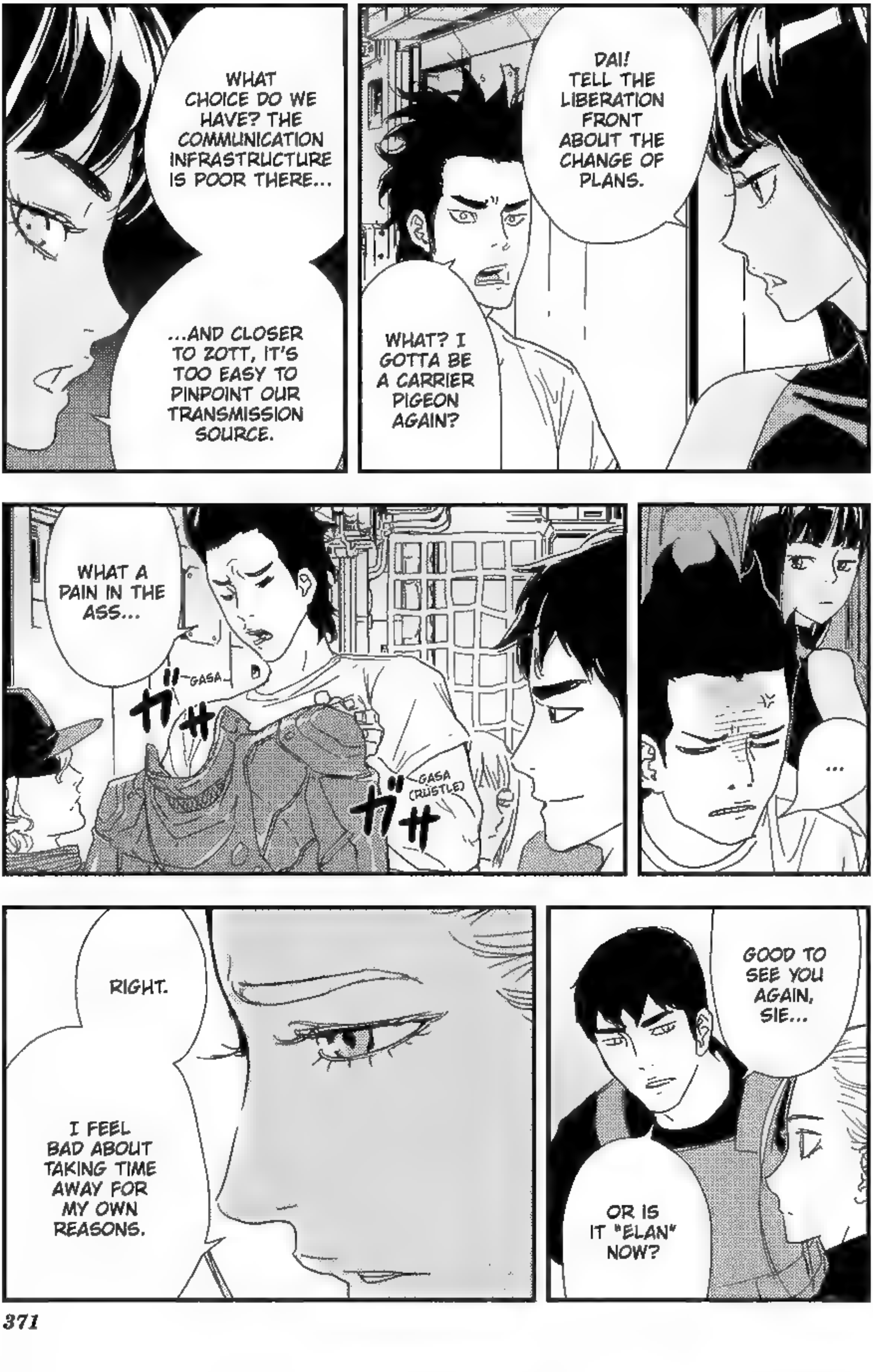

…
...HA HAH.
IT IS FINE IF YOU CANNOT SAY.
GO BACK TO YOUR BASEMENT HOME.
FATHER !?
THAT IS ALL.
SUU (SHH)
スー

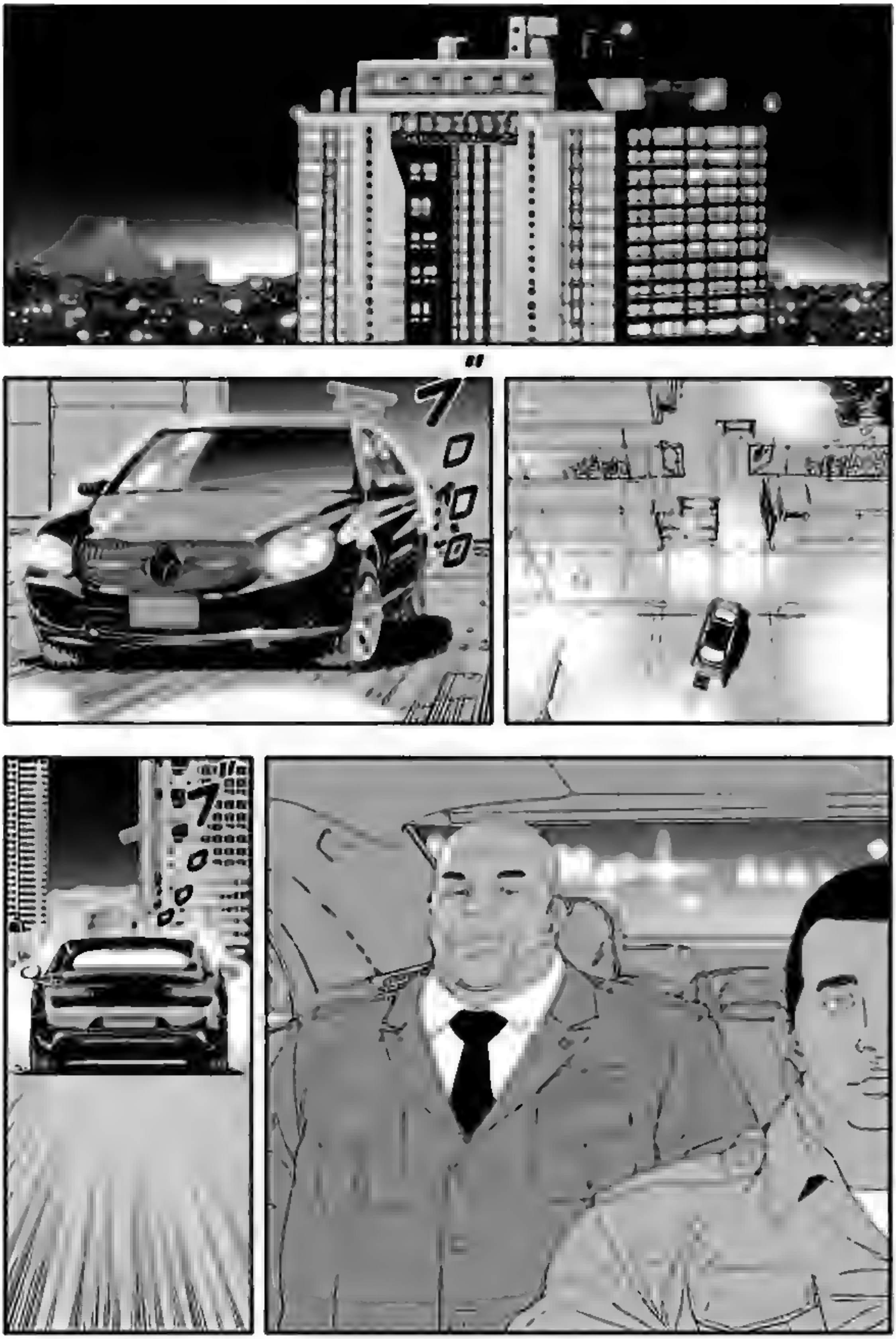

I ALREADY HAVE A GOOD GRASP ON HOW SHE THINKS.
IT MEANS THAT SOMETHING WILL HAPPEN BENEFITING HER, WITHOUT ANY DEATHS INVOLVED.
THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN WHAT HARUKA CAN AND CANNOT TELL ME LIES THEREABOUTS.
WHATEVER IT IS, IT WILL NOT BE AN IMPEDIMENT TO ME.
HE ALREADY UNDERSTANDS ME...
THIS MAN... IS TERRIBLY IMPOSING...

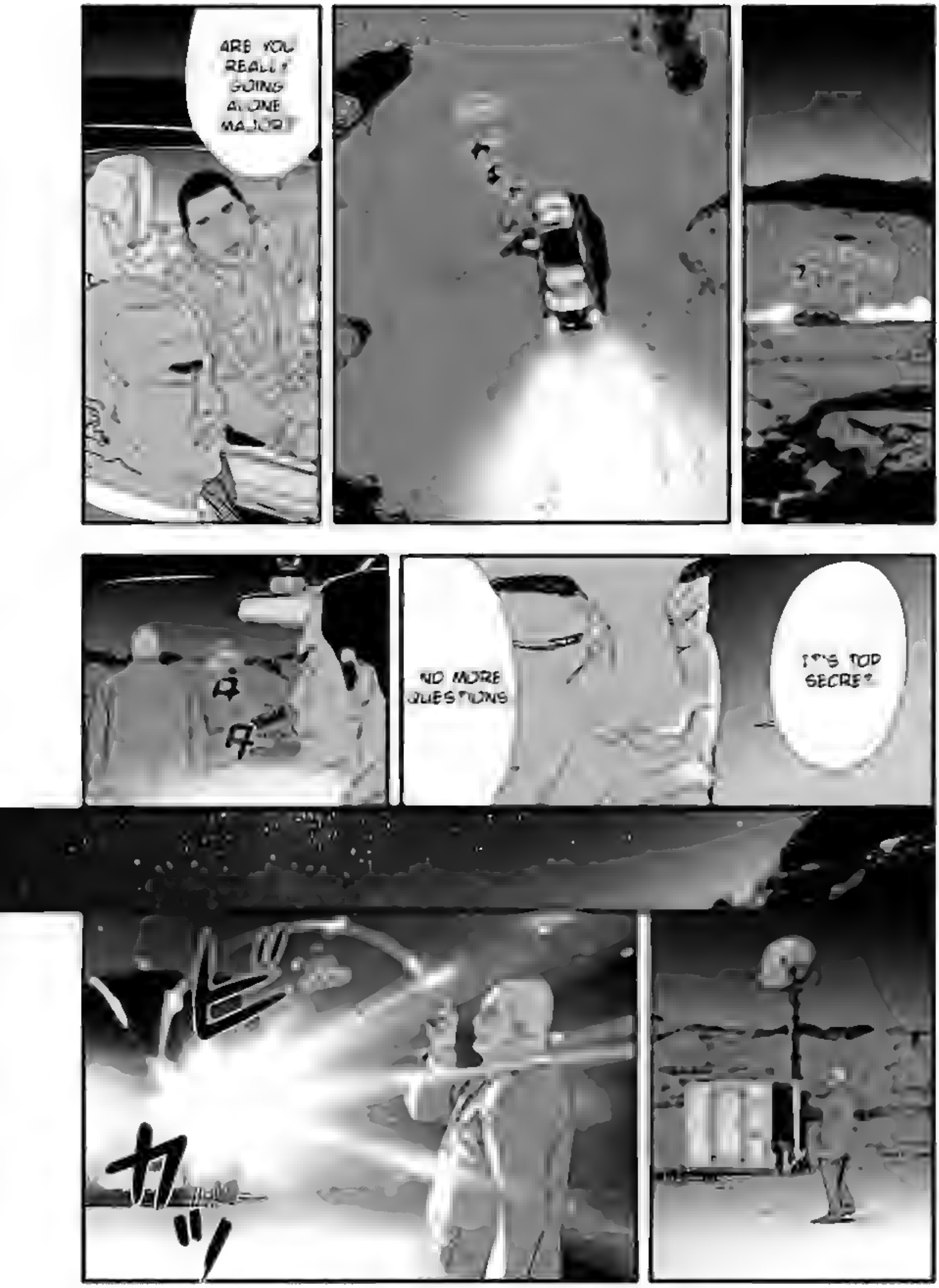

キキッ
(SCREE
ビカッ
BIKA (FLASH)
ブオオオ
BUOOO (VRRRM)
チカ
CHIKA (FLICK)
チカ
CHIKA
WAIT HERE.
ザ
ZA (ZAH)
ザ
ZA
ザッ
ZA
ガチャ
GACHA (CLICK)

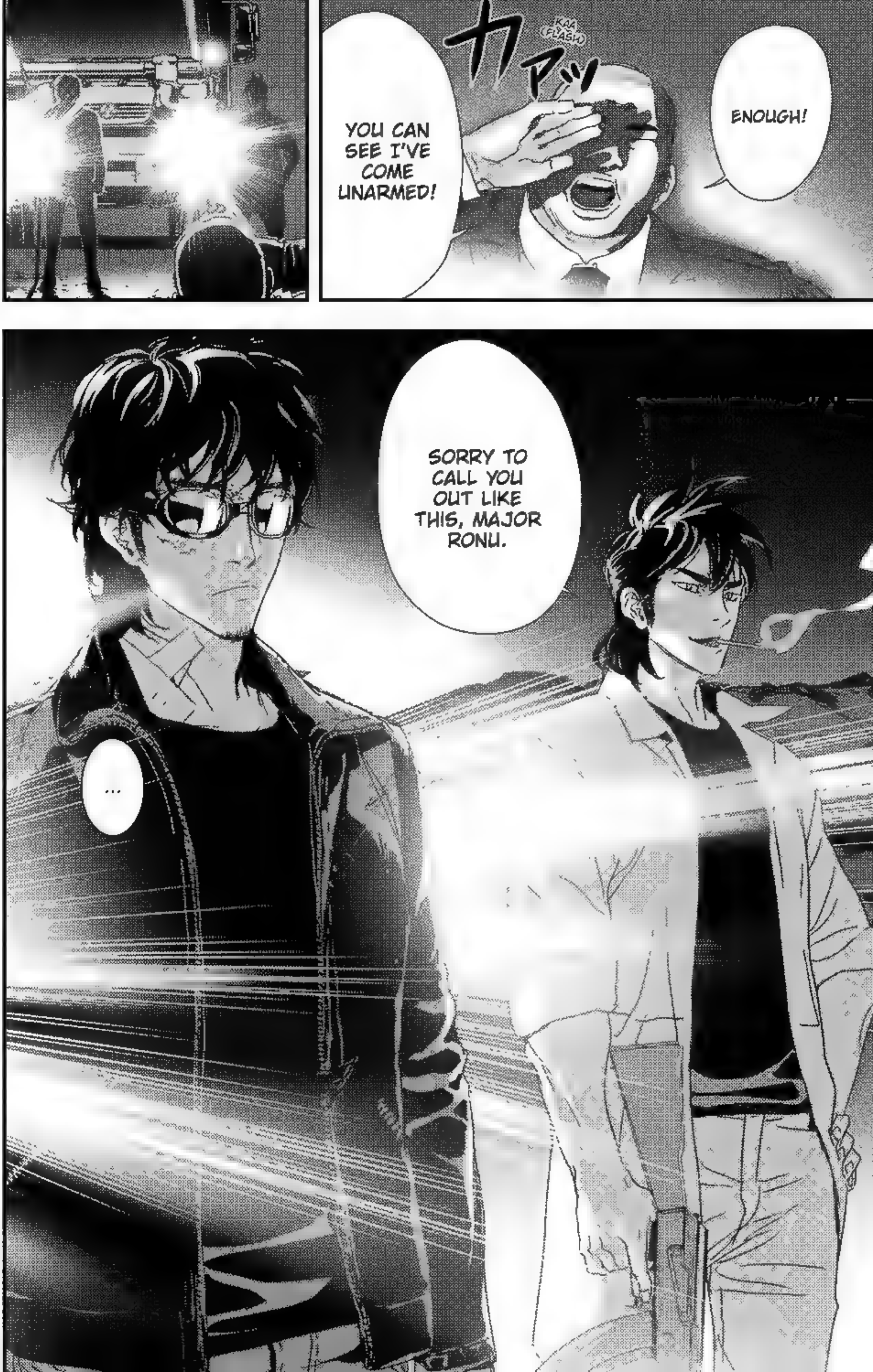

IS THAT YOU, JULIET?
HIYA.
バシッ
BASHI (SMACK)
HOW GO THE PREPARATIONS?
THE DUHANAN TEAM IS ALL HIDING IN THE BUSHES, SO TO SPEAK.
BUT IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, WE HAVE NO IDEA WHEN THE SUMMONS MIGHT COME.
TRUE. WE DIDN'T EXPECT THAT ZASHID HIMSELF WOULD COME OUT TO EXTINGUISH THE FIRES.

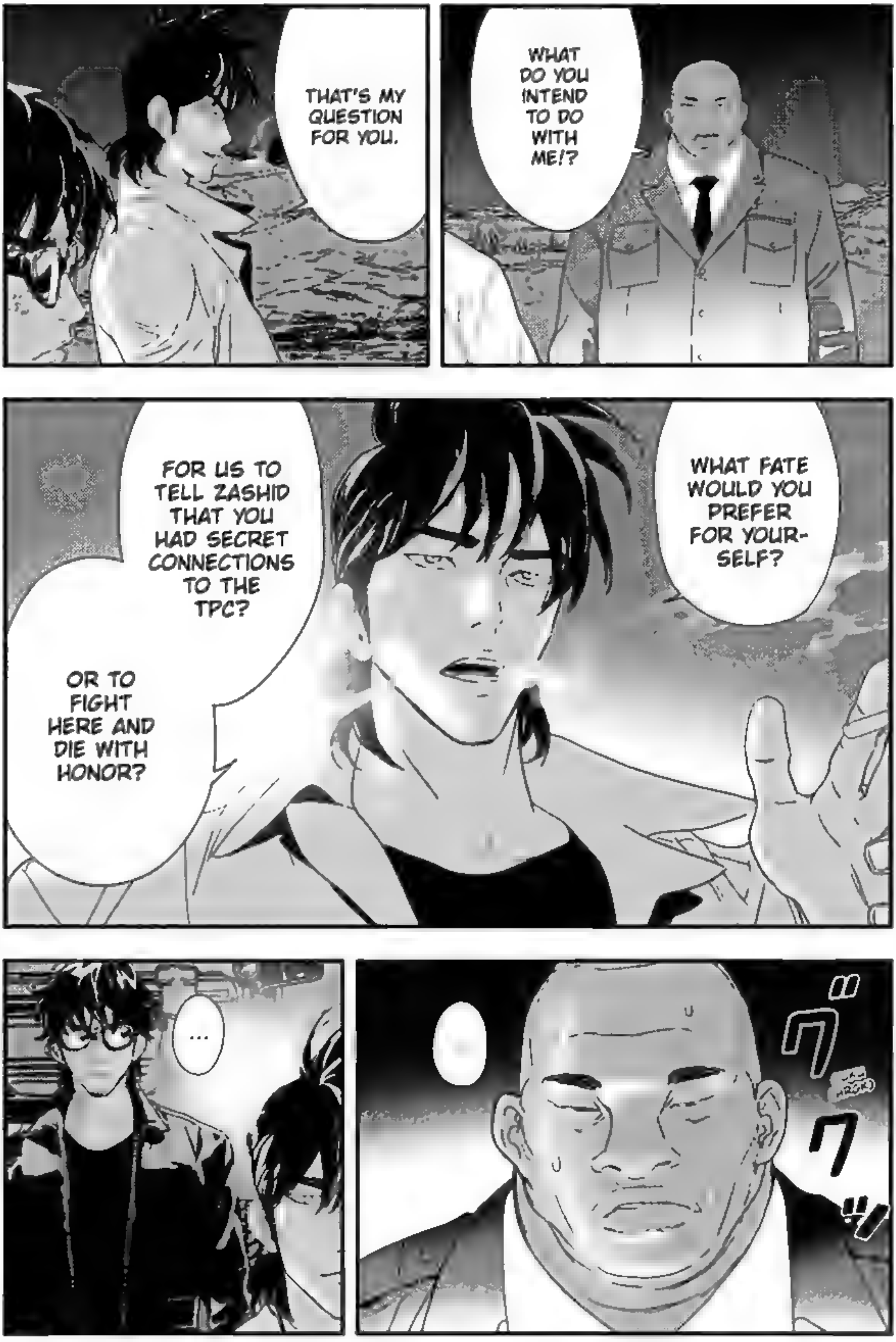

ザッ
ZA (ZSH)
ザッ
ZA
ピピーッ
P. (BEEP)
P.
WHO'S THAT?
INDIA. A COLLEAGUE OF OURS.
ドスッ
DOSU (THUMP)
サッ
SA (SWISH)

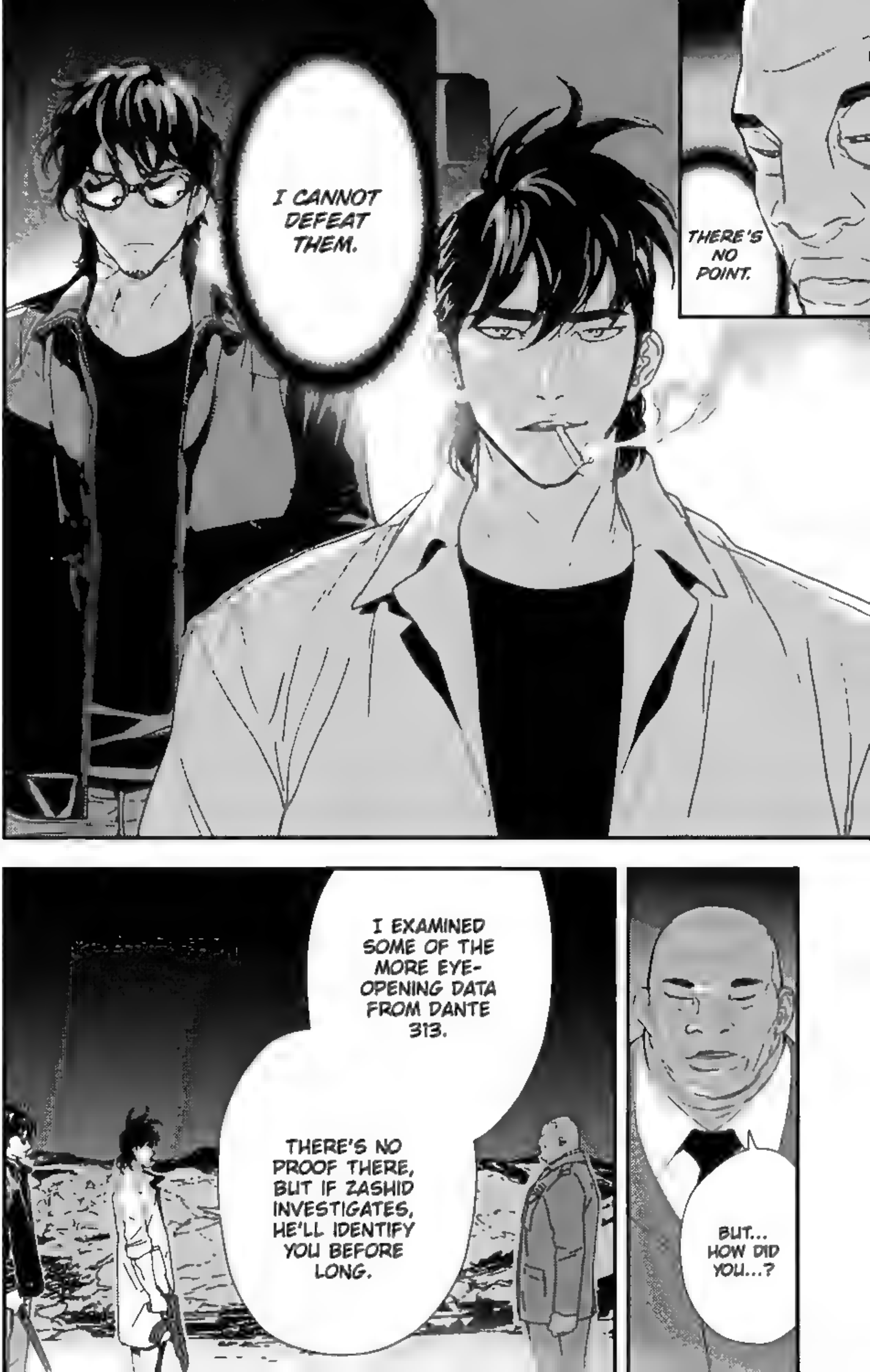

DAI! TELL THE LIBERATION FRONT ABOUT THE CHANGE OF PLANS.
WHAT? I GOTTA BE A CARRIER PIGEON AGAIN?
WHAT CHOICE DO WE HAVE? THE COMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE IS POOR THERE...
...AND CLOSER TO ZOTT, IT'S TOO EASY TO PINPOINT OUR TRANSMISSION SOURCE.
...
WHAT A PAIN IN THE ASS...
ガサ GASA
ガサ GASA (RUSTLE)
GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, SIE...
OR IS IT "ELAN" NOW?
RIGHT.
I FEEL BAD ABOUT TAKING TIME AWAY FOR MY OWN REASONS.

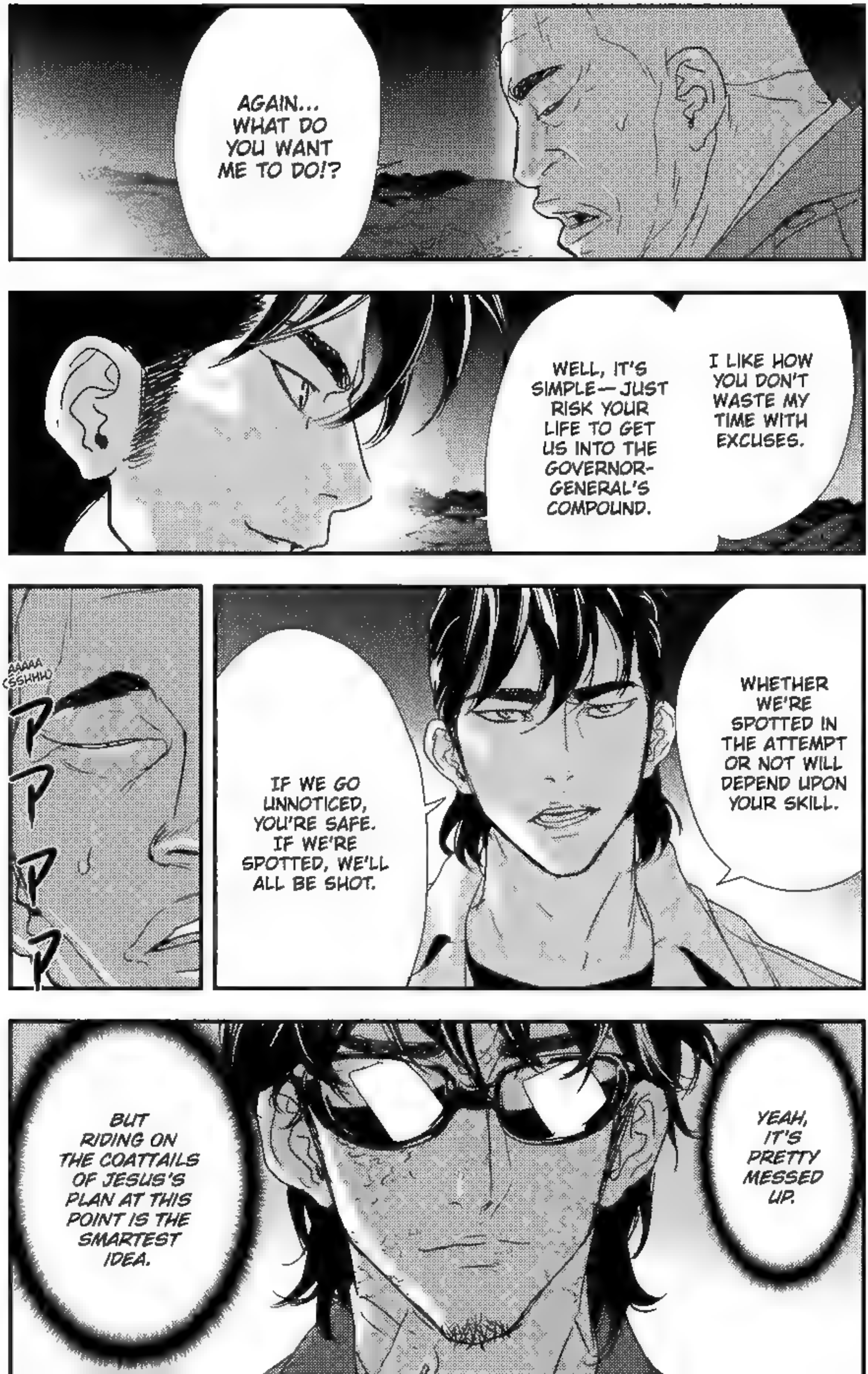

ブロロロ
ブロロロ

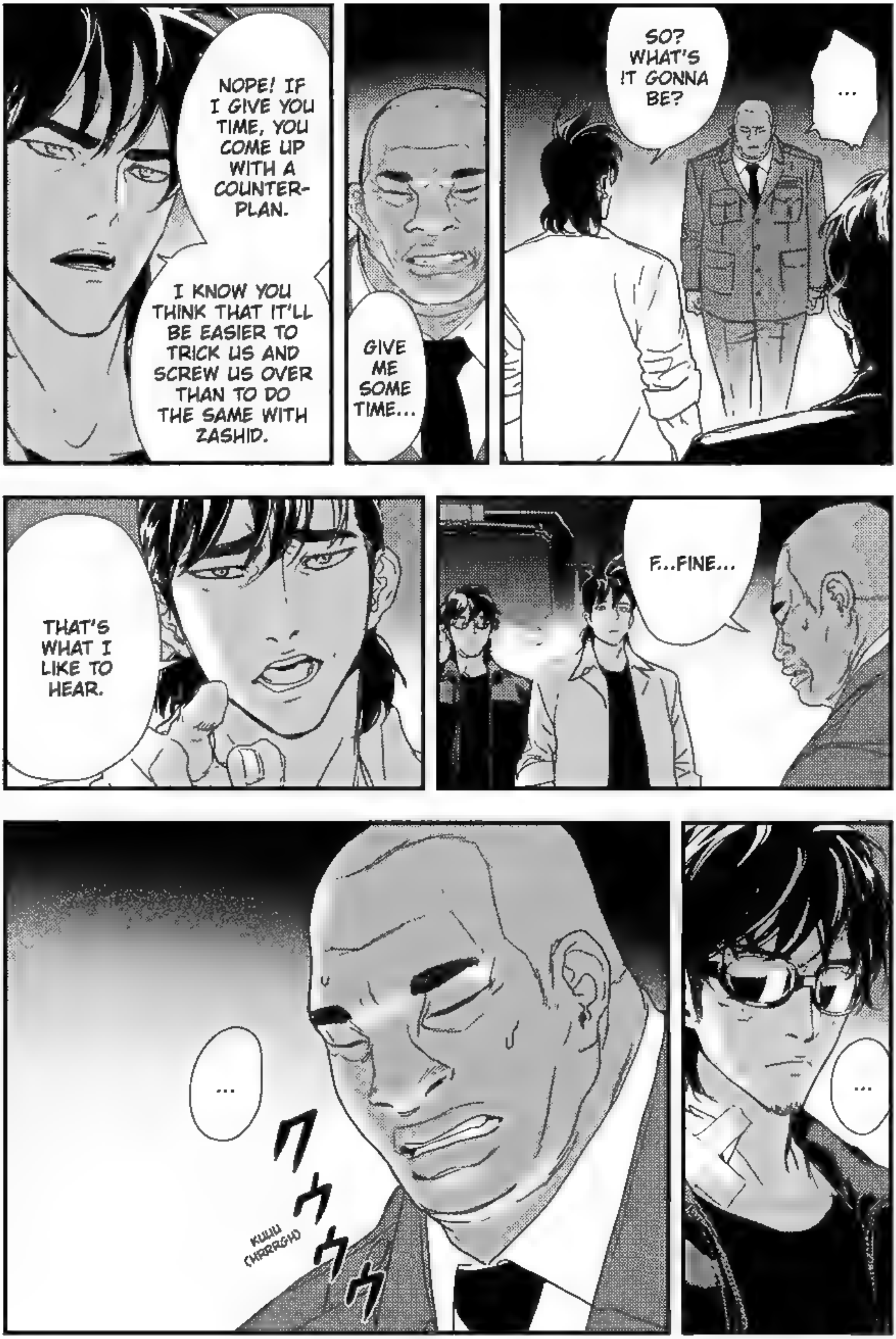

ARE YOU REALLY GOING ALONE MAJOR?
IT'S TOP SECRET.
NO MORE QUESTIONS
カッ

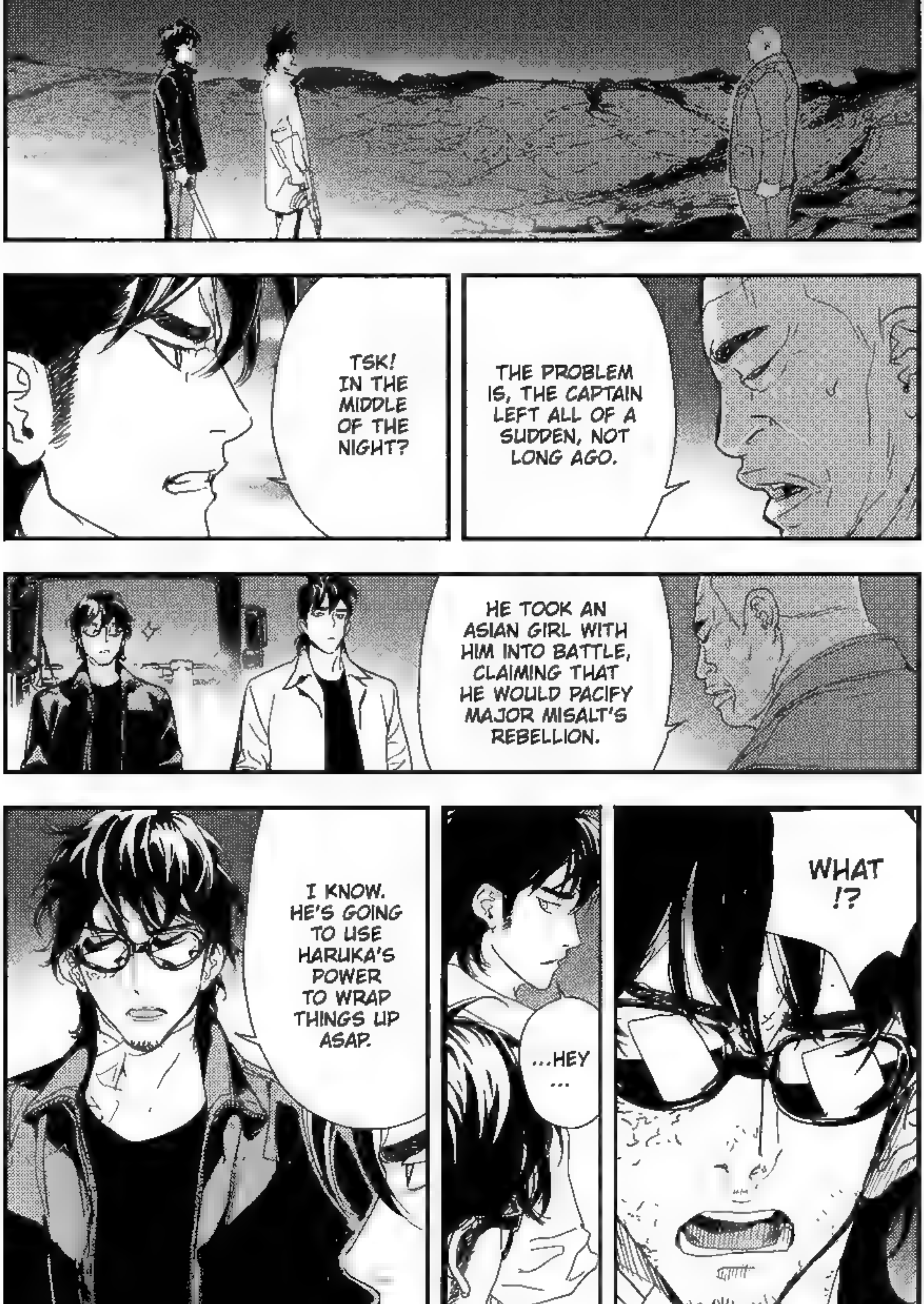

ENOUGH!
KAA (FLASH)
カアッ
YOU CAN SEE I'VE COME UNARMED!
SORRY TO CALL YOU OUT LIKE THIS, MAJOR RONU.
...

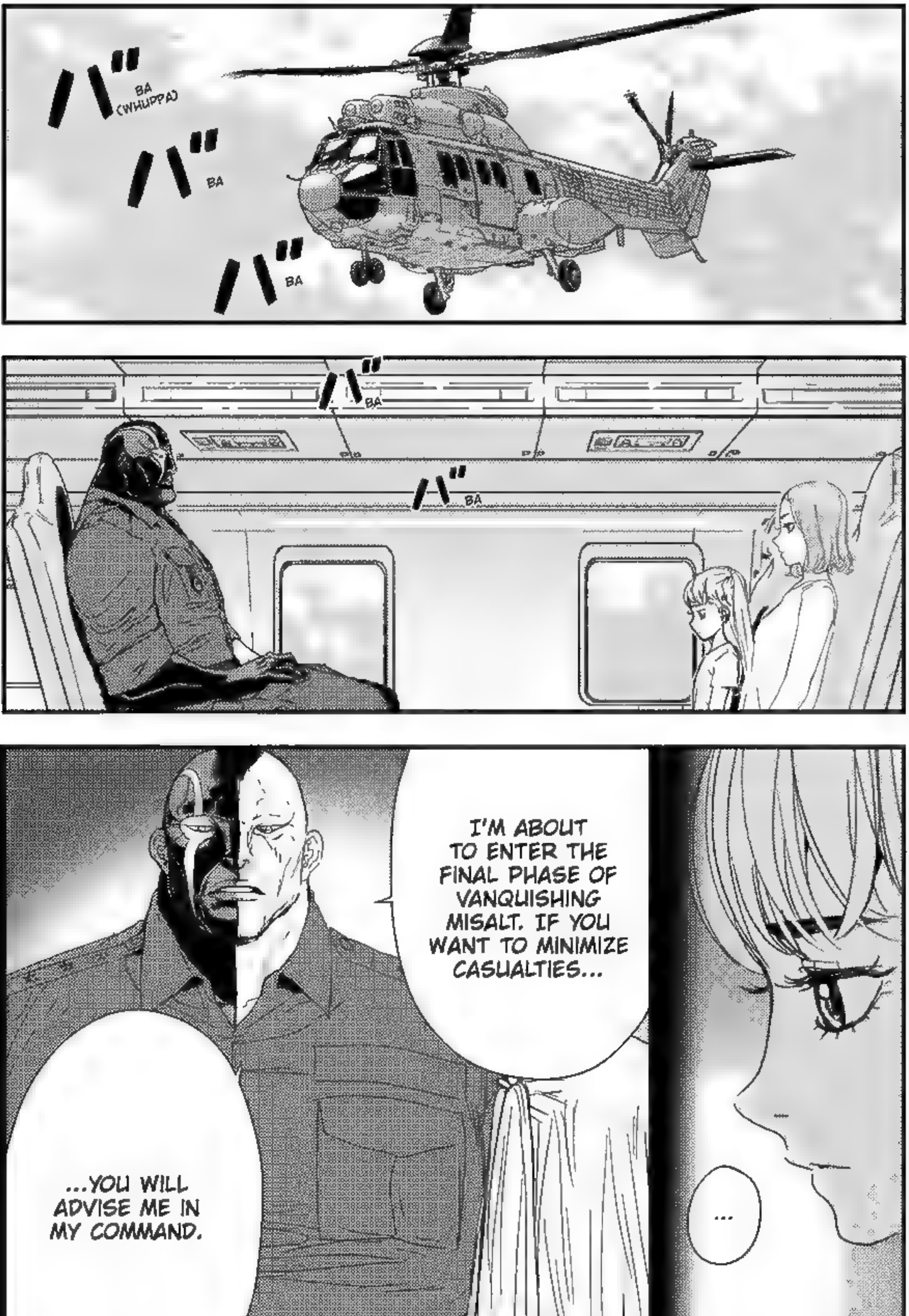

WHAT DO YOU INTEND TO DO WITH ME!?
THAT'S MY QUESTION FOR YOU.
WHAT FATE WOULD YOU PREFER FOR YOURSELF?
FOR US TO TELL ZASHID THAT YOU HAD SECRET CONNECTIONS TO THE TPC?
OR TO FIGHT HERE AND DIE WITH HONOR?
ググッ
...

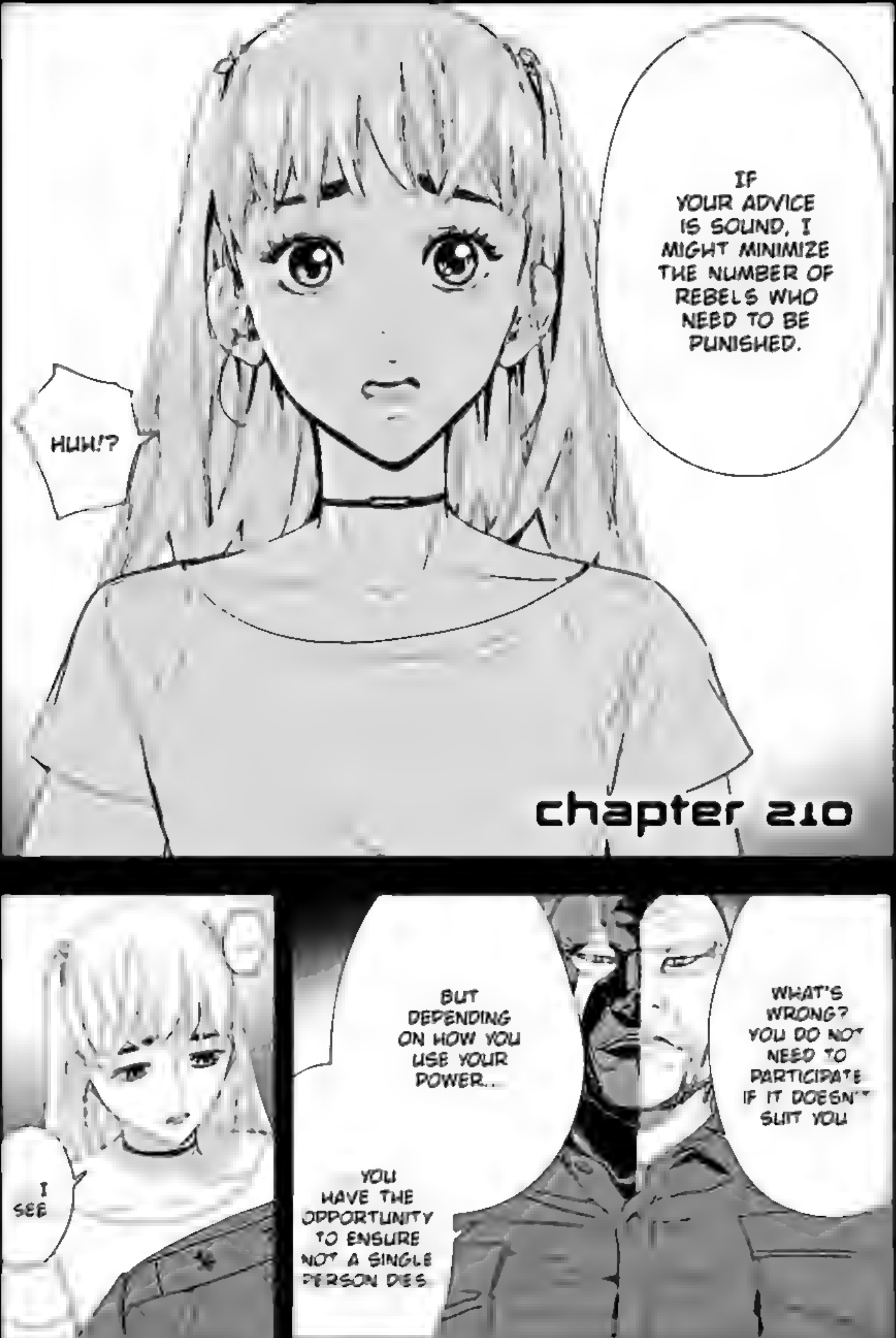

I CANNOT DEFEAT THEM.
THERE'S NO POINT.
I EXAMINED SOME OF THE MORE EYE-OPENING DATA FROM DANTE 313.
THERE'S NO PROOF THERE, BUT IF ZASHID INVESTIGATES, HE'LL IDENTIFY YOU BEFORE LONG.
BUT... HOW DID YOU...?

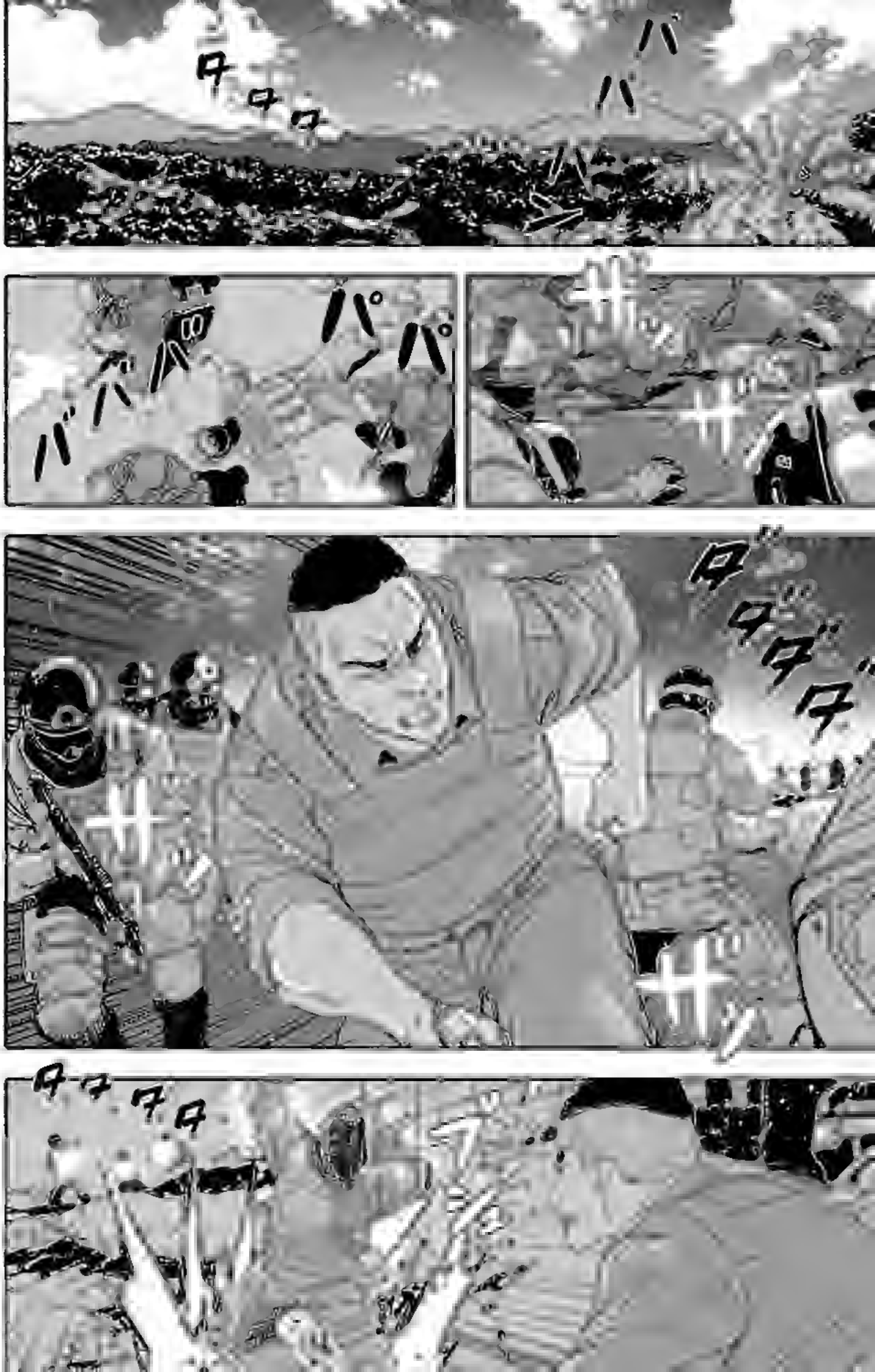

AGAIN... WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO!?
I LIKE HOW YOU DON'T WASTE MY TIME WITH EXCUSES.
WELL, IT'S SIMPLE—JUST RISK YOUR LIFE TO GET US INTO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S COMPOUND.
WHETHER WE'RE SPOTTED IN THE ATTEMPT OR NOT WILL DEPEND UPON YOUR SKILL.
IF WE GO UNNOTICED, YOU'RE SAFE. IF WE'RE SPOTTED, WE'LL ALL BE SHOT.
AAAAA (SSHHH
YEAH, IT'S PRETTY MESSED UP.
BUT RIDING ON THE COATTAILS OF JESUS'S PLAN AT THIS POINT IS THE SMARTEST IDEA.

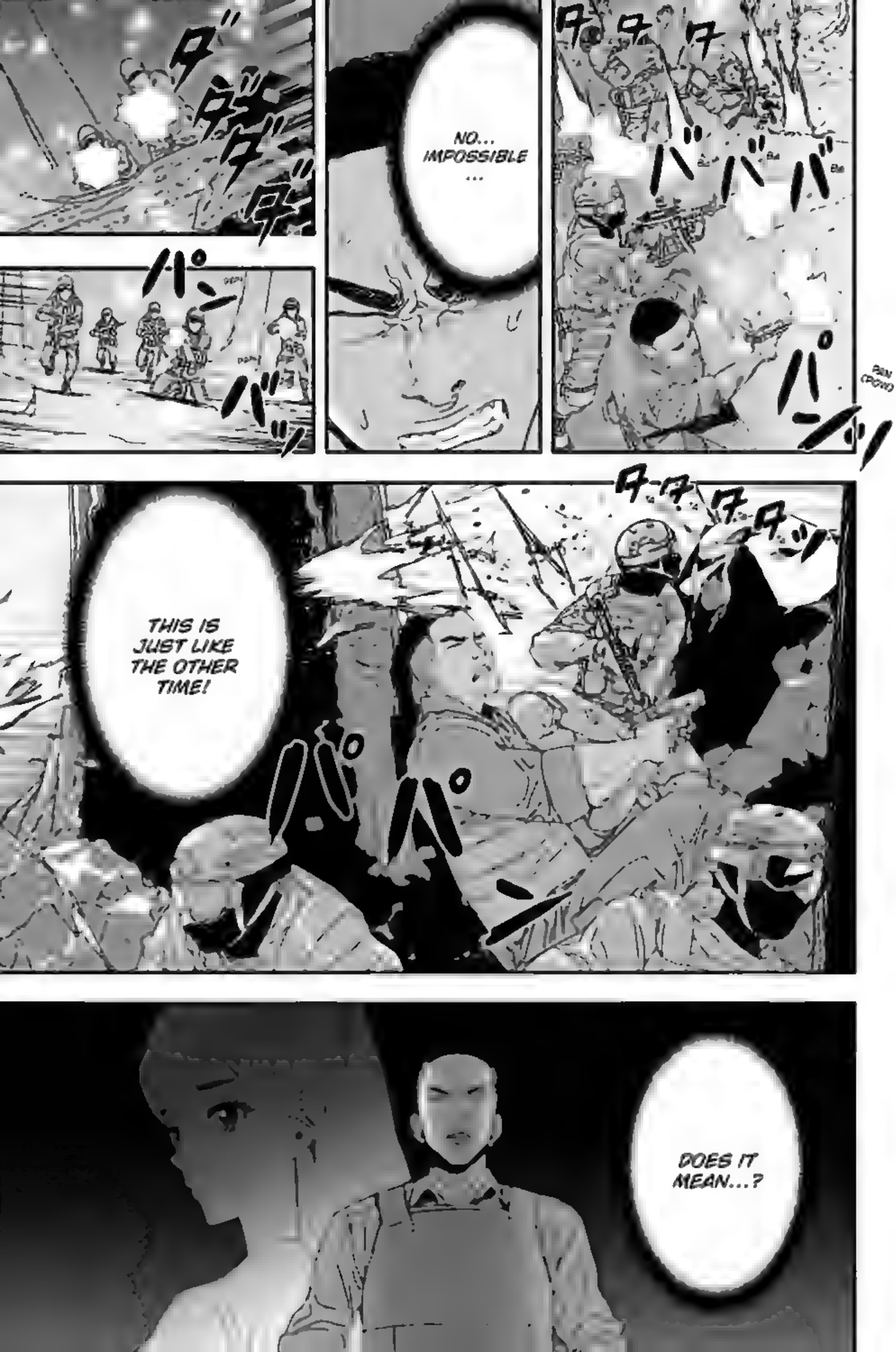

SO? WHAT'S IT GONNA BE?
...
GIVE ME SOME TIME...
NOPE! IF I GIVE YOU TIME, YOU COME UP WITH A COUNTER-PLAN.
I KNOW YOU THINK THAT IT'LL BE EASIER TO TRICK US AND SCREW US OVER THAN TO DO THE SAME WITH ZASHID.
F...FINE...
THAT'S WHAT I LIKE TO HEAR.
...
...
KUUU (HRRRGH)

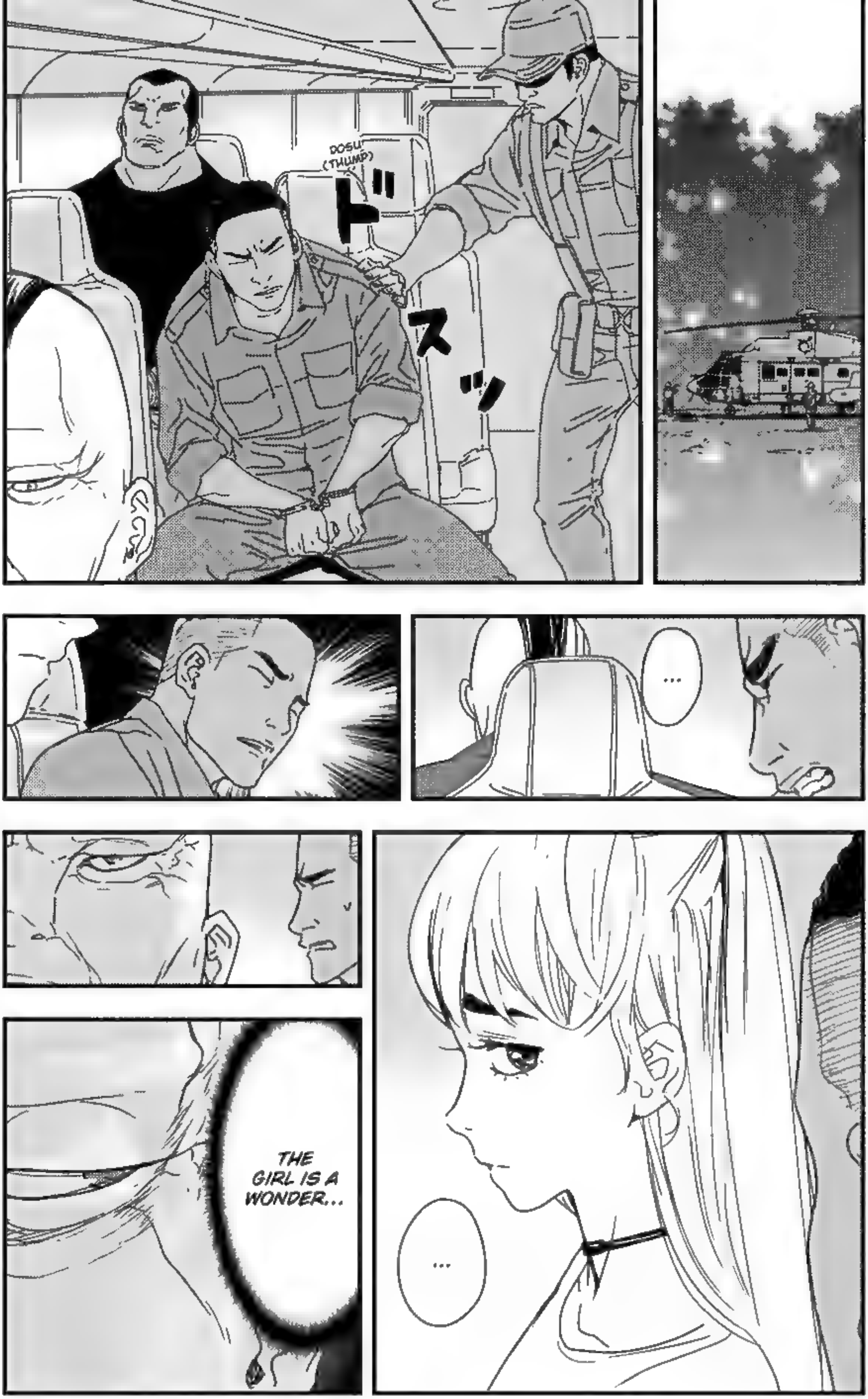

TSK! IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT?
THE PROBLEM IS, THE CAPTAIN LEFT ALL OF A SUDDEN, NOT LONG AGO.
HE TOOK AN ASIAN GIRL WITH HIM INTO BATTLE, CLAIMING THAT HE WOULD PACIFY MAJOR MISALT'S REBELLION.
I KNOW. HE'S GOING TO USE HARUKA'S POWER TO WRAP THINGS UP ASAP.
...HEY ...
WHAT !?

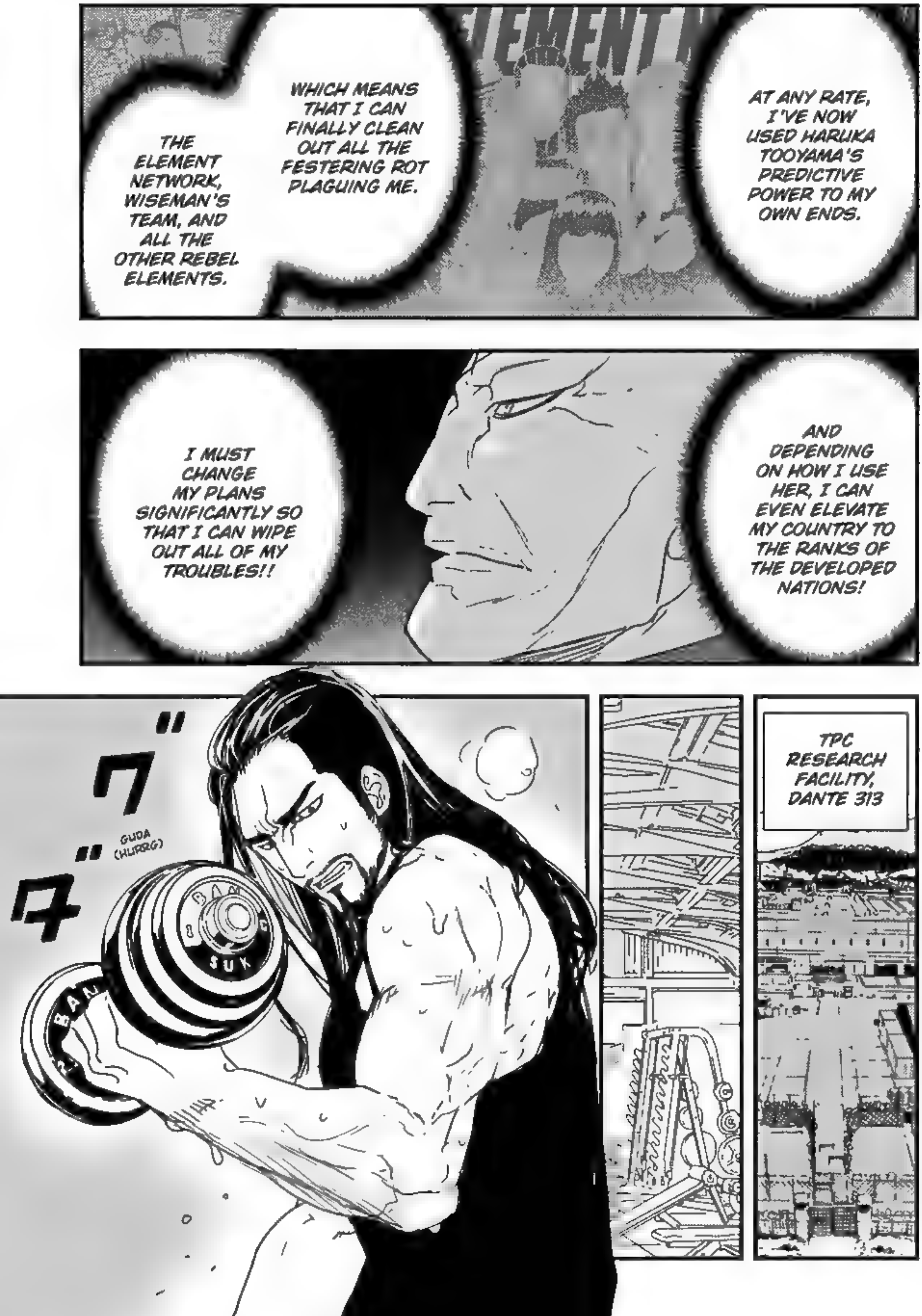

バ" BA (WHUPPA)
バ" BA
バ" BA
バ" BA
バ" BA
I'M ABOUT TO ENTER THE FINAL PHASE OF VANQUISHING MISALT. IF YOU WANT TO MINIMIZE CASUALTIES...
...YOU WILL ADVISE ME IN MY COMMAND.
...

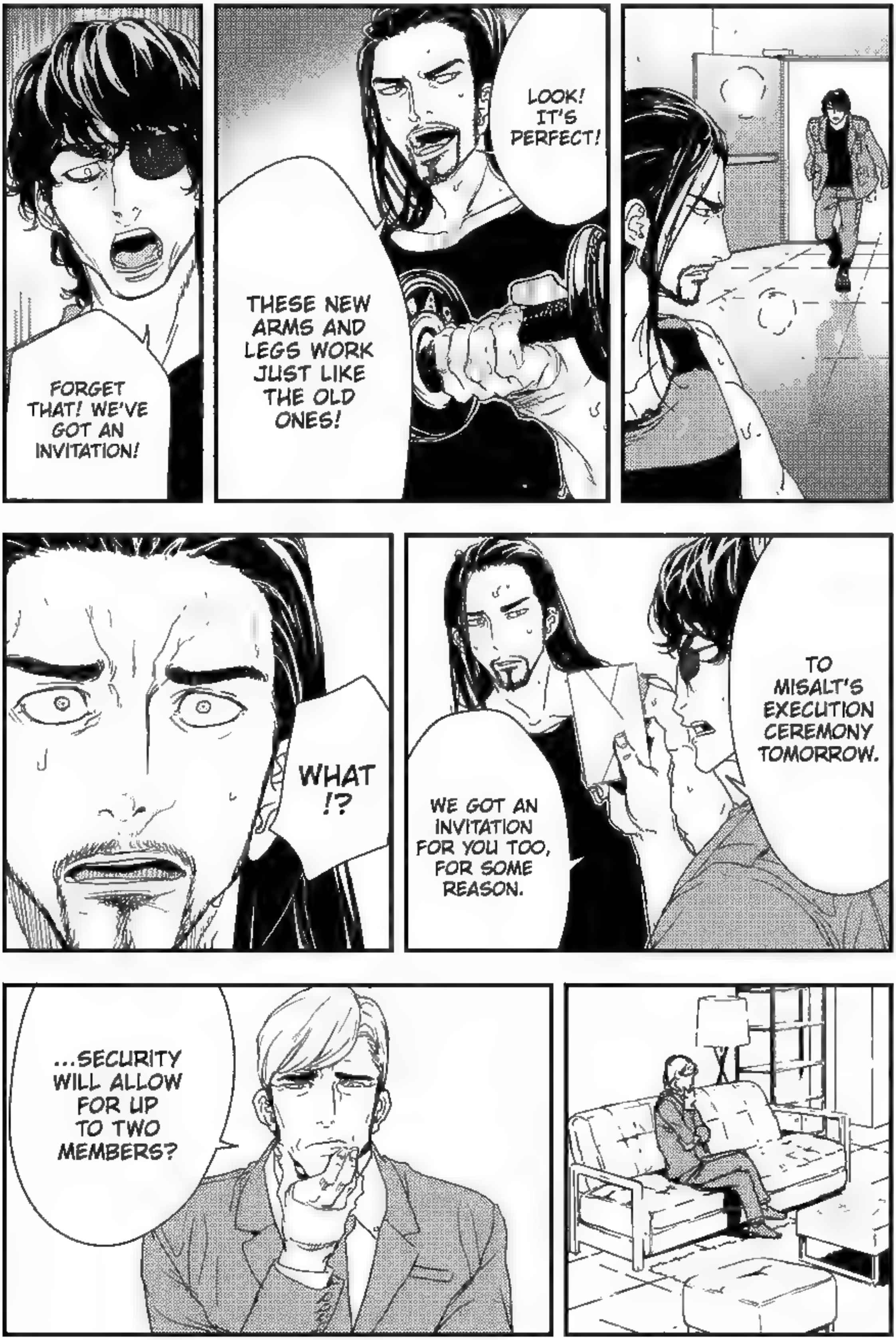

IF YOUR ADVICE IS SOUND, I MIGHT MINIMIZE THE NUMBER OF REBELS WHO NEED TO BE PUNISHED.
HUH!?
chapter 210
WHAT'S WRONG? YOU DO NOT NEED TO PARTICIPATE IF IT DOESN'T SUIT YOU
BUT DEPENDING ON HOW YOU USE YOUR POWER..
YOU HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENSURE NOT A SINGLE PERSON DIES.
I SEE

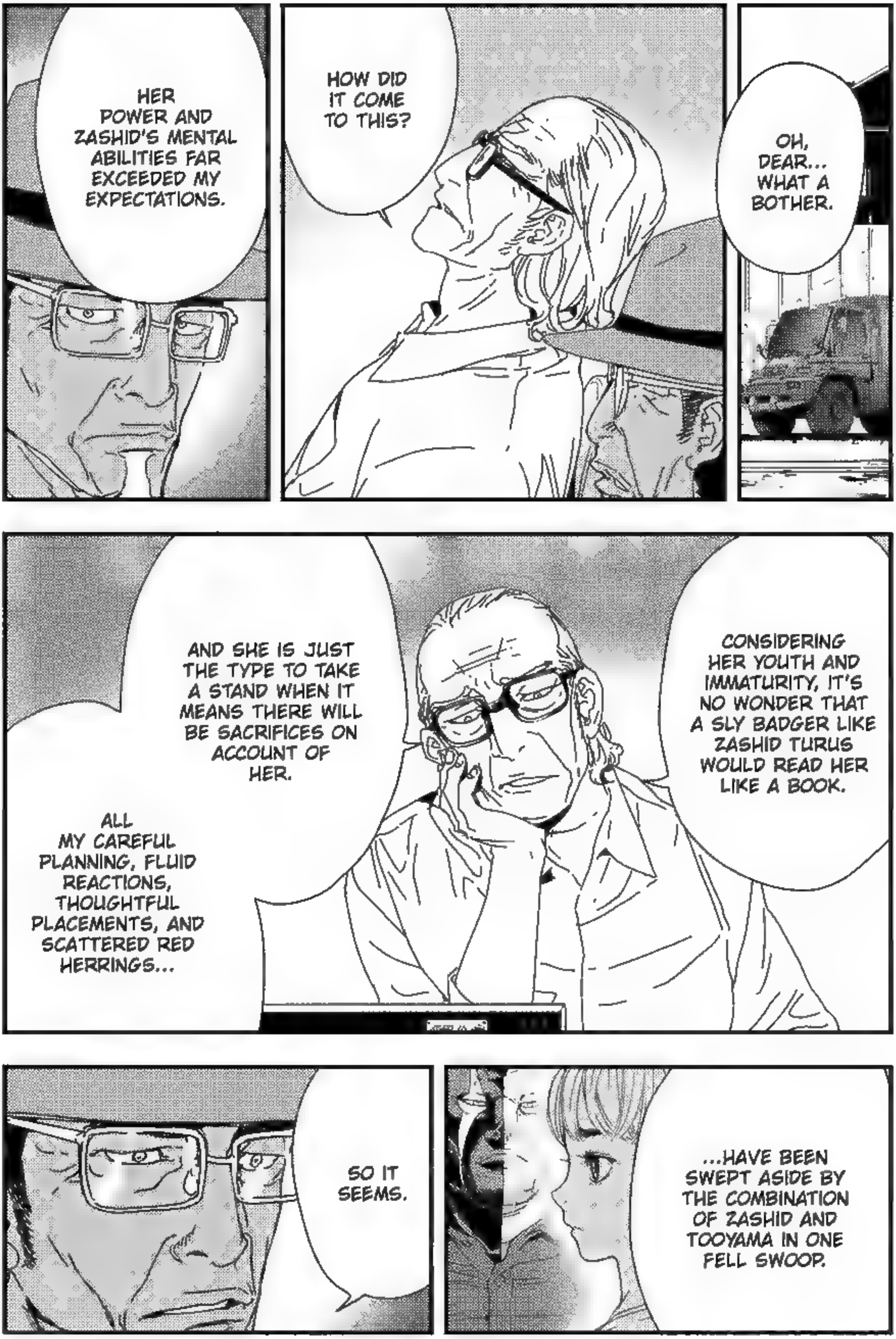

パパパ
タタタ
ザッ
ザッ
パパ
パパパ
ババ
ダダダダ
ザッ
ザッ
タタタタ

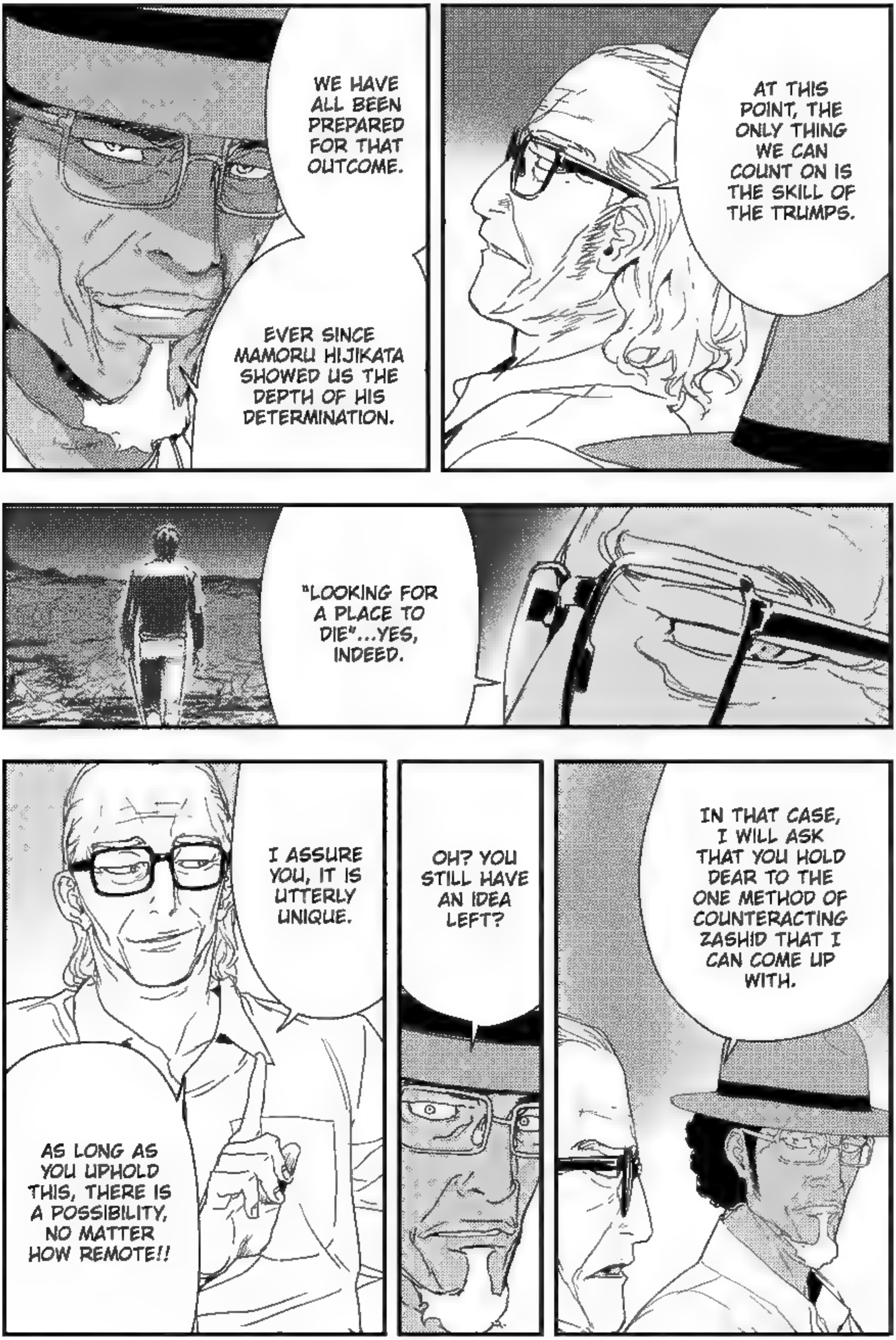

タタタ
ババババ
Ba Ba Ba
パーンッ
PAN (POW)
NO... IMPOSSIBLE ...
ダダダダ
パン
PAN
バッ
タタタタッ
THIS IS JUST LIKE THE OTHER TIME!
パパ
DOES IT MEAN...?

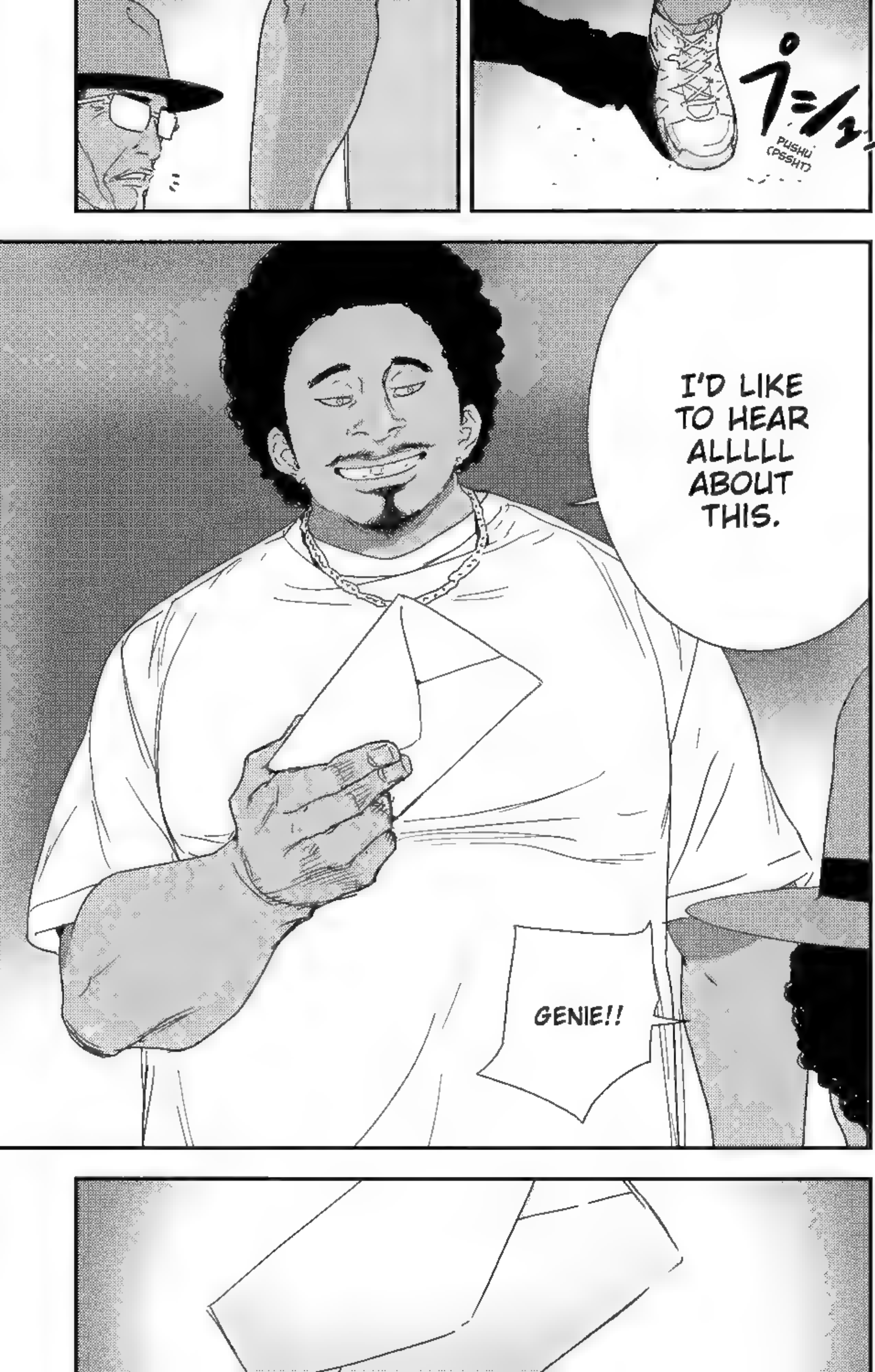

DOSU (THUMP)
ドスッ
...
...
THE GIRL IS A WONDER...

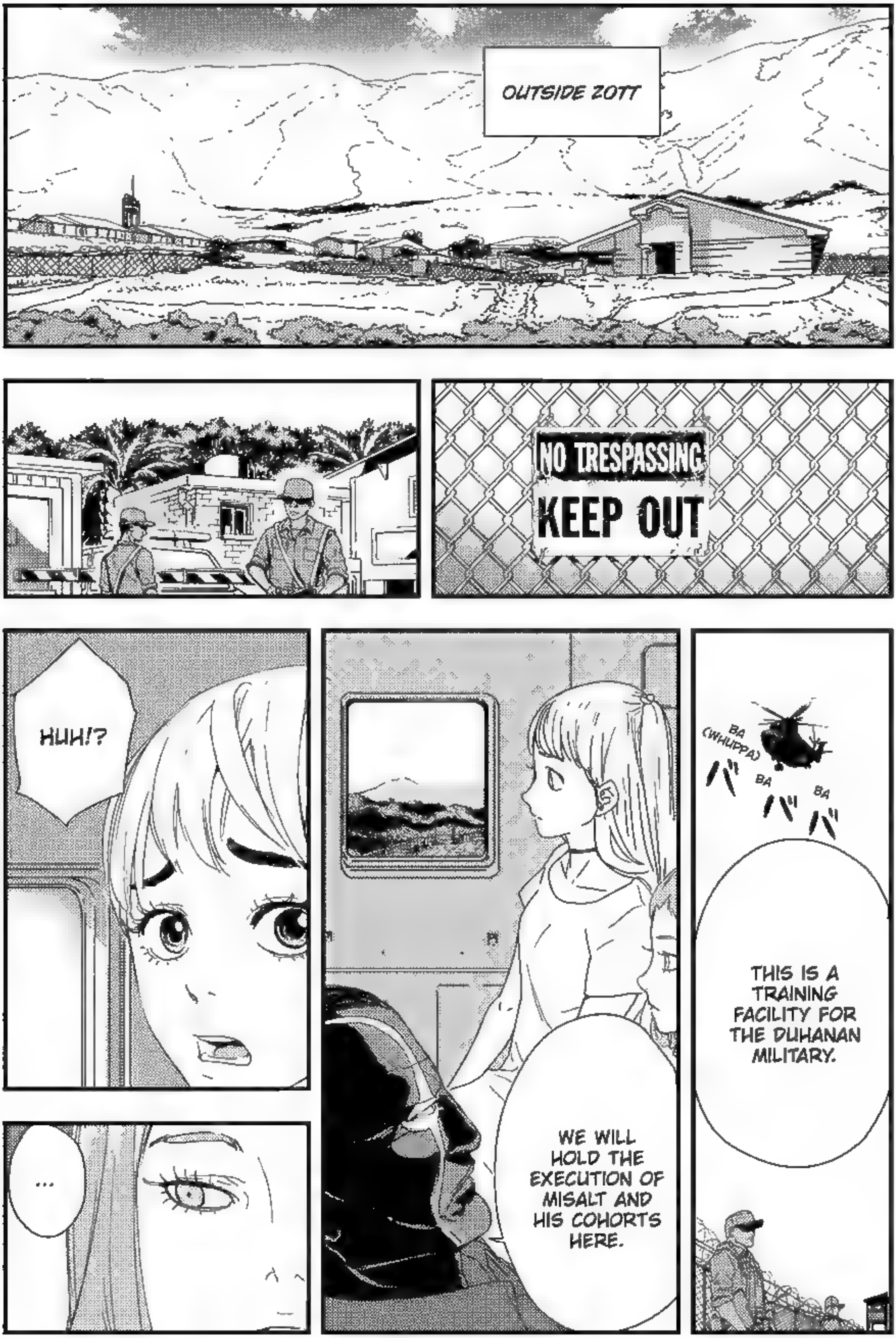

ELEMENT N
AT ANY RATE, I'VE NOW USED HARUKA TOOYAMA'S PREDICTIVE POWER TO MY OWN ENDS.
WHICH MEANS THAT I CAN FINALLY CLEAN OUT ALL THE FESTERING ROT PLAGUING ME.
THE ELEMENT NETWORK, WISEMAN'S TEAM, AND ALL THE OTHER REBEL ELEMENTS.
AND DEPENDING ON HOW I USE HER, I CAN EVEN ELEVATE MY COUNTRY TO THE RANKS OF THE DEVELOPED NATIONS!
I MUST CHANGE MY PLANS SIGNIFICANTLY SO THAT I CAN WIPE OUT ALL OF MY TROUBLES!!
TPC RESEARCH FACILITY, DANTE 313
グダ
GUDA (HURRG)

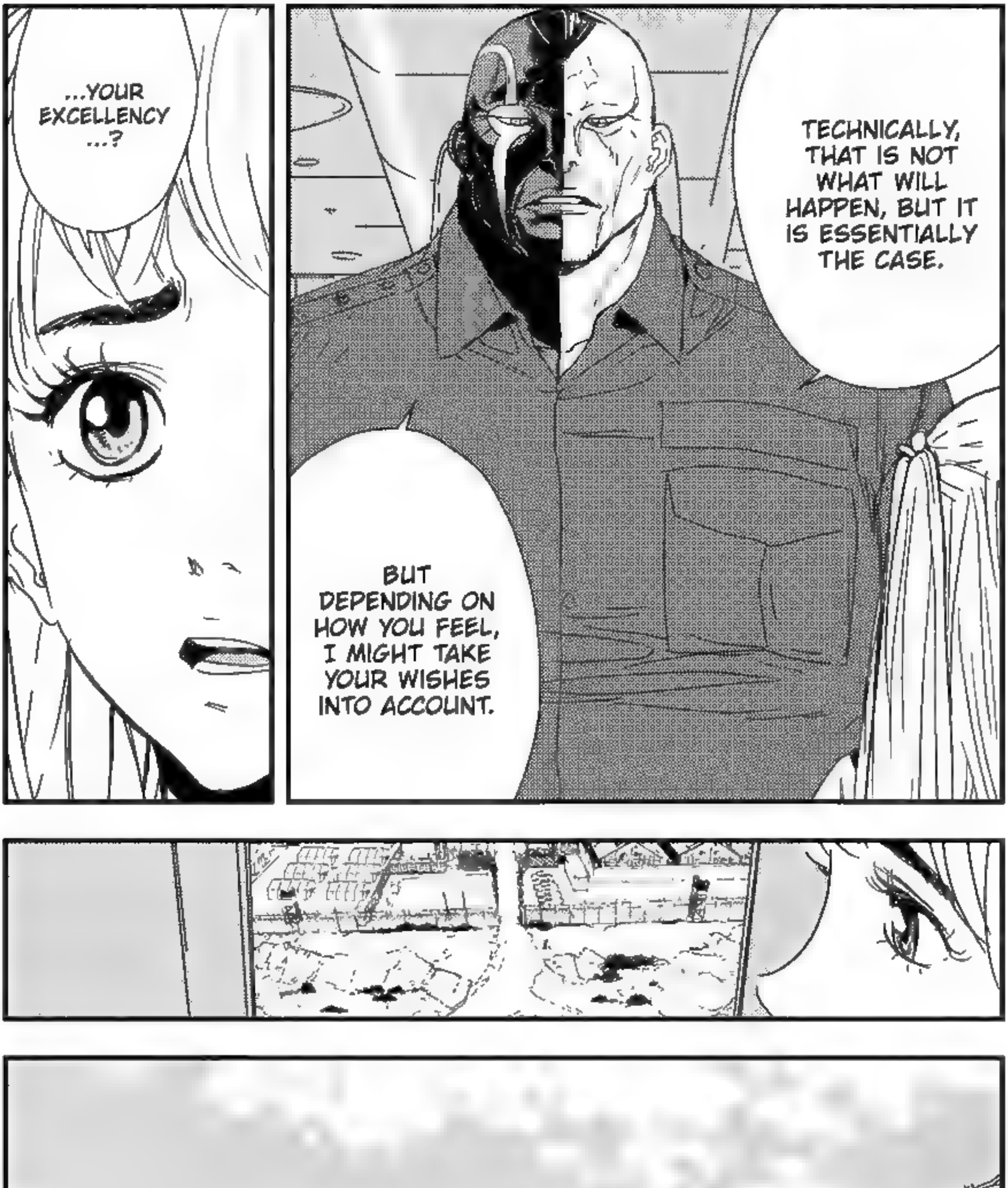

LOOK! IT'S PERFECT!
THESE NEW ARMS AND LEGS WORK JUST LIKE THE OLD ONES!
FORGET THAT! WE'VE GOT AN INVITATION!
TO MISALT'S EXECUTION CEREMONY TOMORROW.
WE GOT AN INVITATION FOR YOU TOO, FOR SOME REASON.
WHAT!?
...SECURITY WILL ALLOW FOR UP TO TWO MEMBERS?

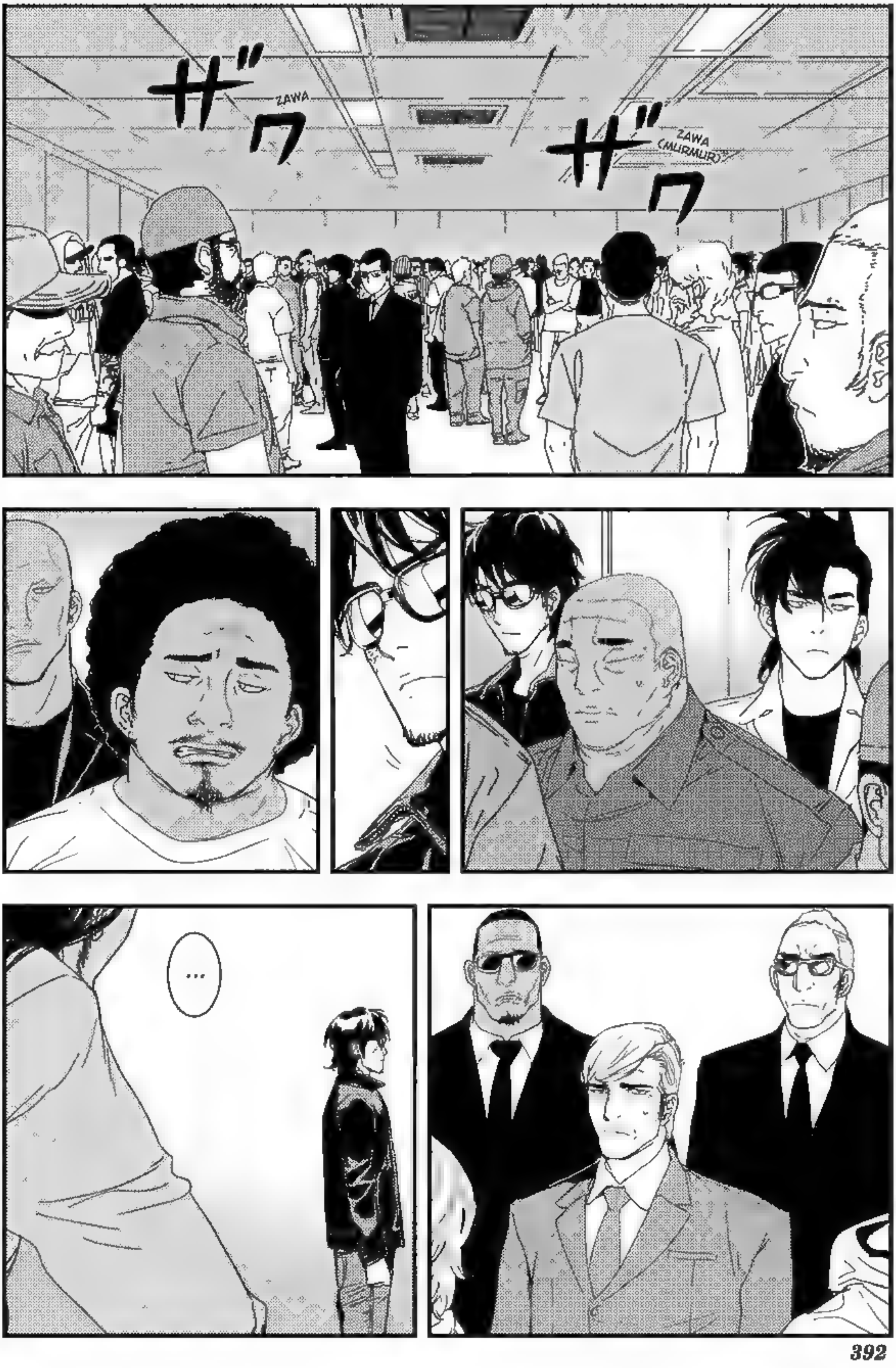

OH, DEAR... WHAT A BOTHER.
HOW DID IT COME TO THIS?
HER POWER AND ZASHID'S MENTAL ABILITIES FAR EXCEEDED MY EXPECTATIONS.
CONSIDERING HER YOUTH AND IMMATURITY, IT'S NO WONDER THAT A SLY BADGER LIKE ZASHID TURUS WOULD READ HER LIKE A BOOK.
AND SHE IS JUST THE TYPE TO TAKE A STAND WHEN IT MEANS THERE WILL BE SACRIFICES ON ACCOUNT OF HER.
ALL MY CAREFUL PLANNING, FLUID REACTIONS, THOUGHTFUL PLACEMENTS, AND SCATTERED RED HERRINGS...
...HAVE BEEN SWEPT ASIDE BY THE COMBINATION OF ZASHID AND TOOYAMA IN ONE FELL SWOOP.
SO IT SEEMS.

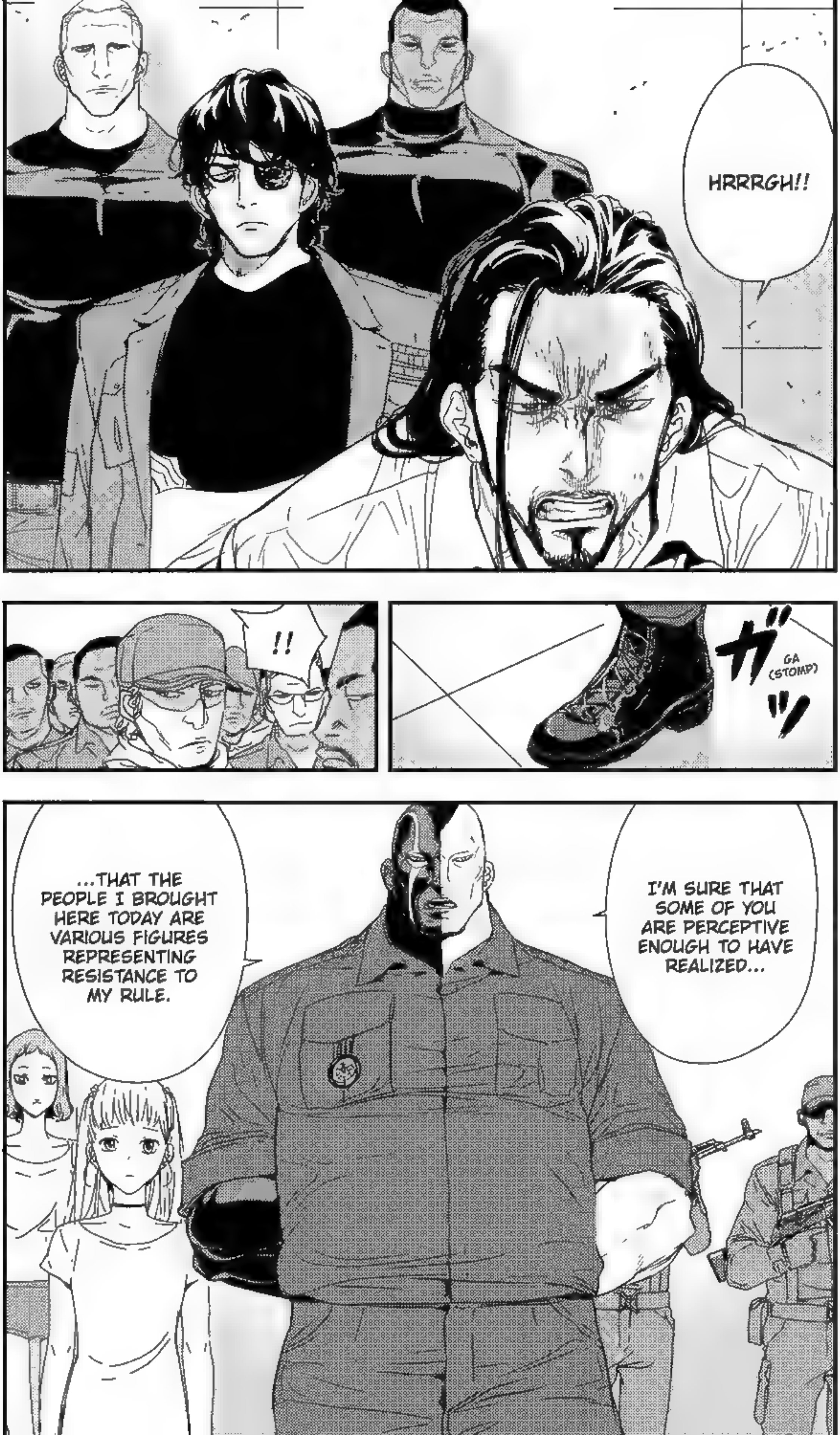

AT THIS POINT, THE ONLY THING WE CAN COUNT ON IS THE SKILL OF THE TRUMPS.
WE HAVE ALL BEEN PREPARED FOR THAT OUTCOME.
EVER SINCE MAMORU HIJIKATA SHOWED US THE DEPTH OF HIS DETERMINATION.
"LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO DIE"...YES, INDEED.
IN THAT CASE, I WILL ASK THAT YOU HOLD DEAR TO THE ONE METHOD OF COUNTERACTING ZASHID THAT I CAN COME UP WITH.
OH? YOU STILL HAVE AN IDEA LEFT?
I ASSURE YOU, IT IS UTTERLY UNIQUE.
AS LONG AS YOU UPHOLD THIS, THERE IS A POSSIBILITY, NO MATTER HOW REMOTE!!

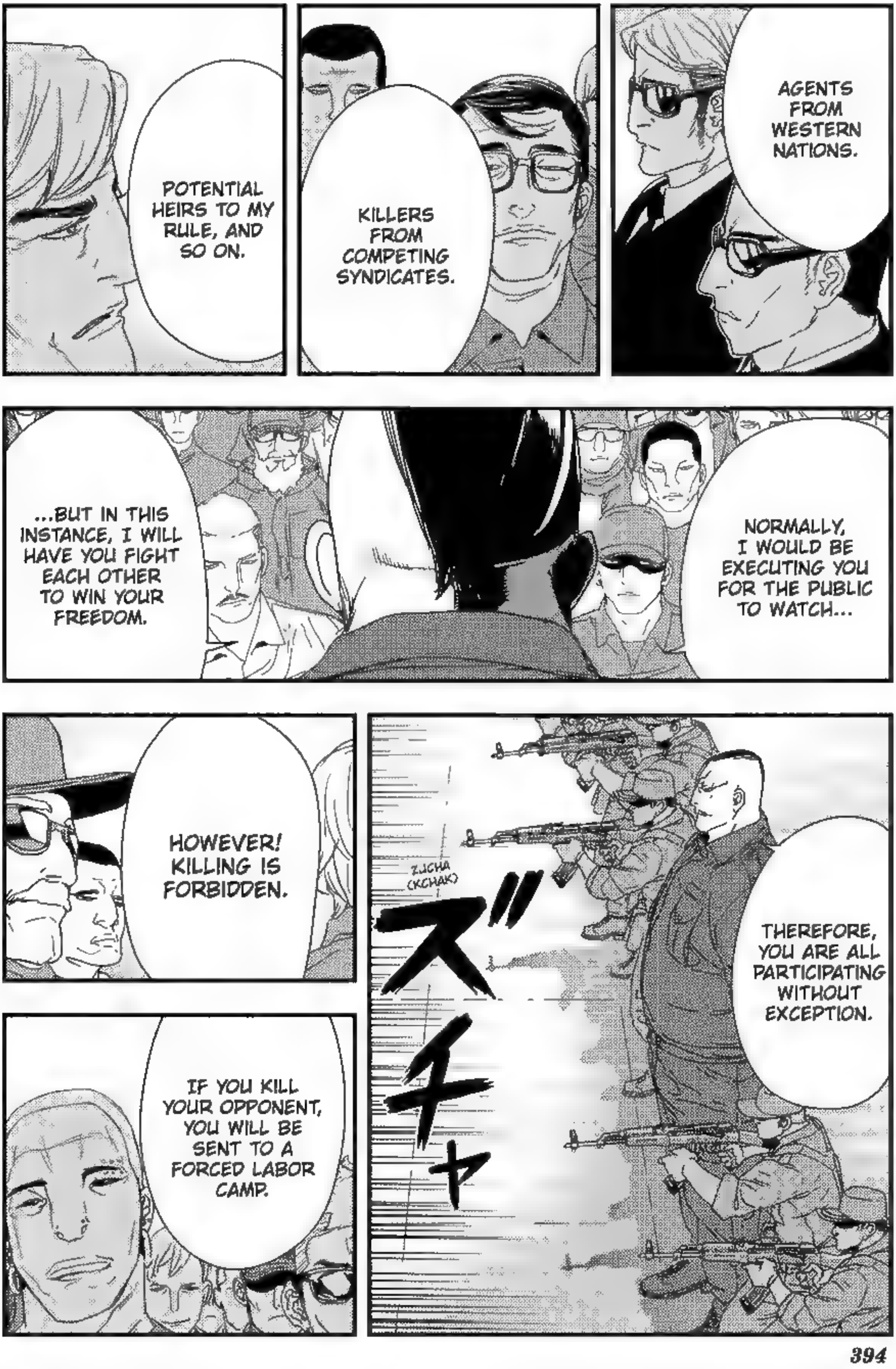

ぷしゅ
PUSHU (PSSHT)
I'D LIKE TO HEAR ALLLLL ABOUT THIS.
GENIE!!

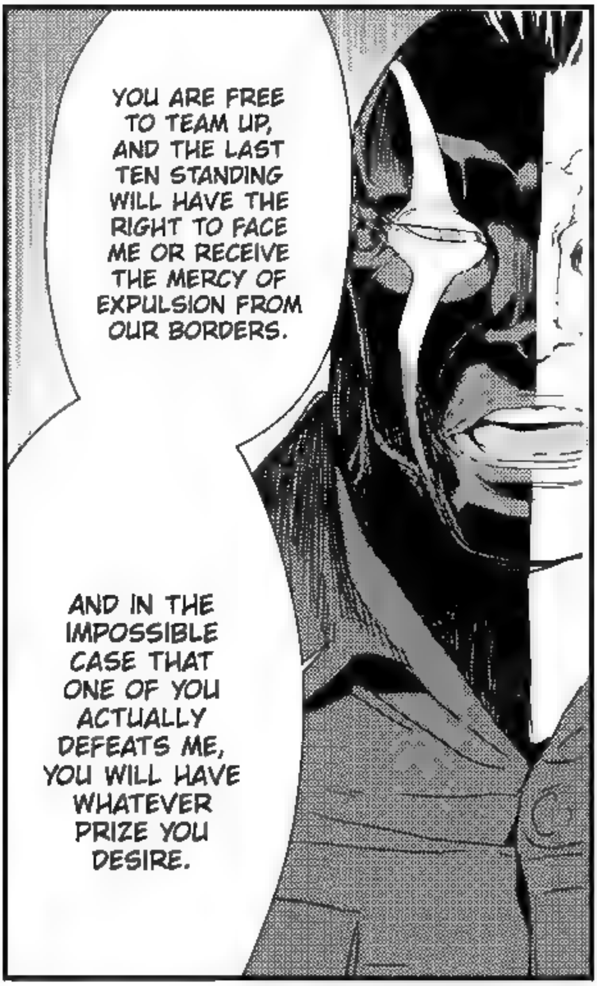

OUTSIDE ZOTT
NO TRESPASSING
KEEP OUT
BA (WHUPPA) バ
BA バ
BA バ
THIS IS A TRAINING FACILITY FOR THE DUHANAN MILITARY.
WE WILL HOLD THE EXECUTION OF MISALT AND HIS COHORTS HERE.
HUH!?
…

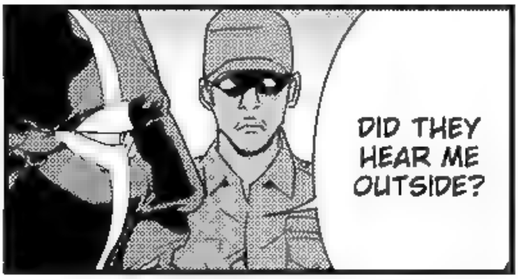

TECHNICALLY, THAT IS NOT WHAT WILL HAPPEN, BUT IT IS ESSENTIALLY THE CASE.
BUT DEPENDING ON HOW YOU FEEL, I MIGHT TAKE YOUR WISHES INTO ACCOUNT.
...YOUR EXCELLENCY ...?

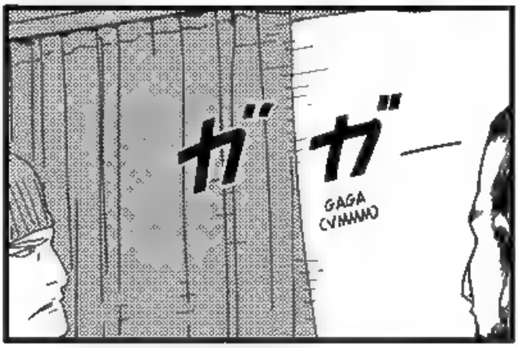

ザワ
ZAWA (MURMUR)
ザワ
ZAWA
...

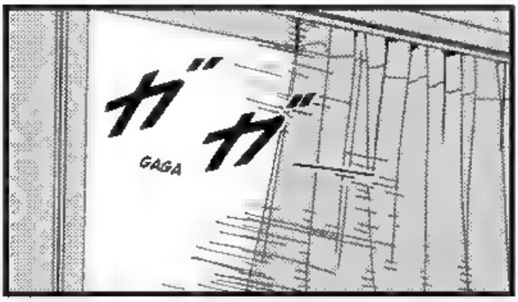

HRRRGH!!
ガッ
GA (STOMP)
!!
I'M SURE THAT SOME OF YOU ARE PERCEPTIVE ENOUGH TO HAVE REALIZED...
...THAT THE PEOPLE I BROUGHT HERE TODAY ARE VARIOUS FIGURES REPRESENTING RESISTANCE TO MY RULE.

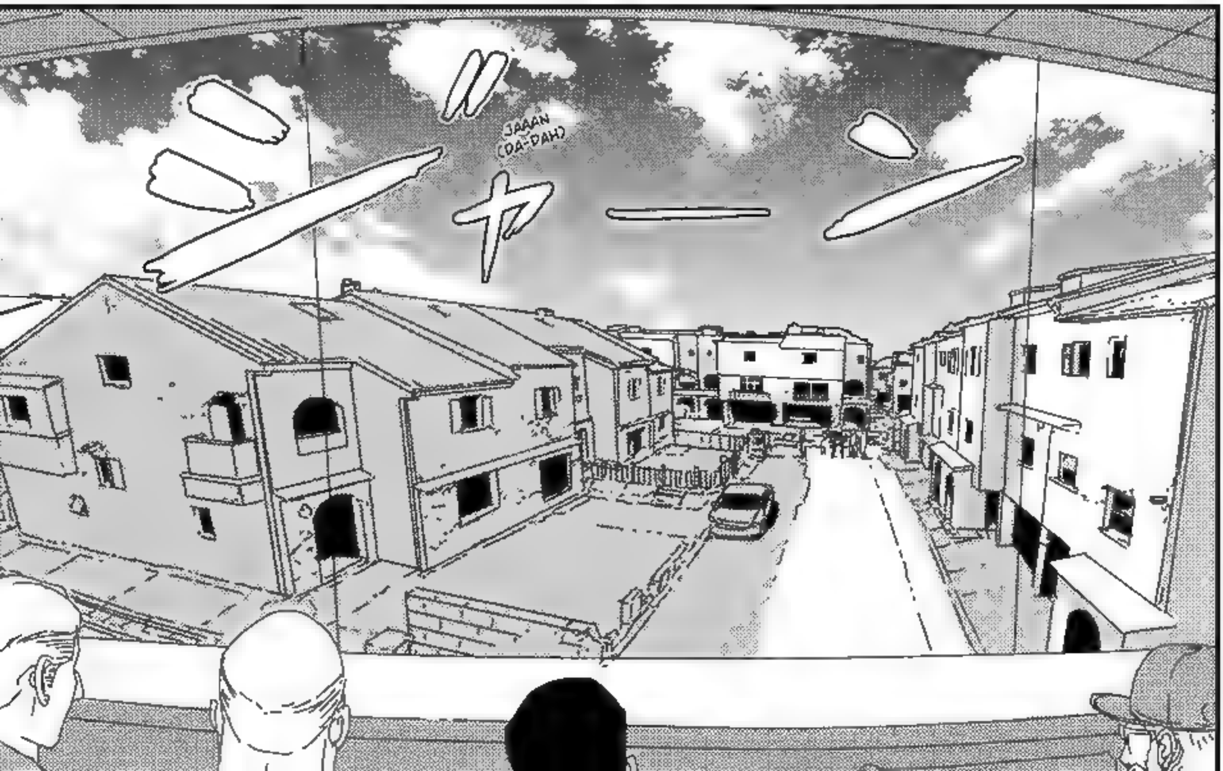

AGENTS FROM WESTERN NATIONS.
KILLERS FROM COMPETING SYNDICATES.
POTENTIAL HEIRS TO MY RULE, AND SO ON.
NORMALLY, I WOULD BE EXECUTING YOU FOR THE PUBLIC TO WATCH...
...BUT IN THIS INSTANCE, I WILL HAVE YOU FIGHT EACH OTHER TO WIN YOUR FREEDOM.
ZJCHA (KCHAK)
ズチャ
THEREFORE, YOU ARE ALL PARTICIPATING WITHOUT EXCEPTION.
HOWEVER! KILLING IS FORBIDDEN.
IF YOU KILL YOUR OPPONENT, YOU WILL BE SENT TO A FORCED LABOR CAMP.

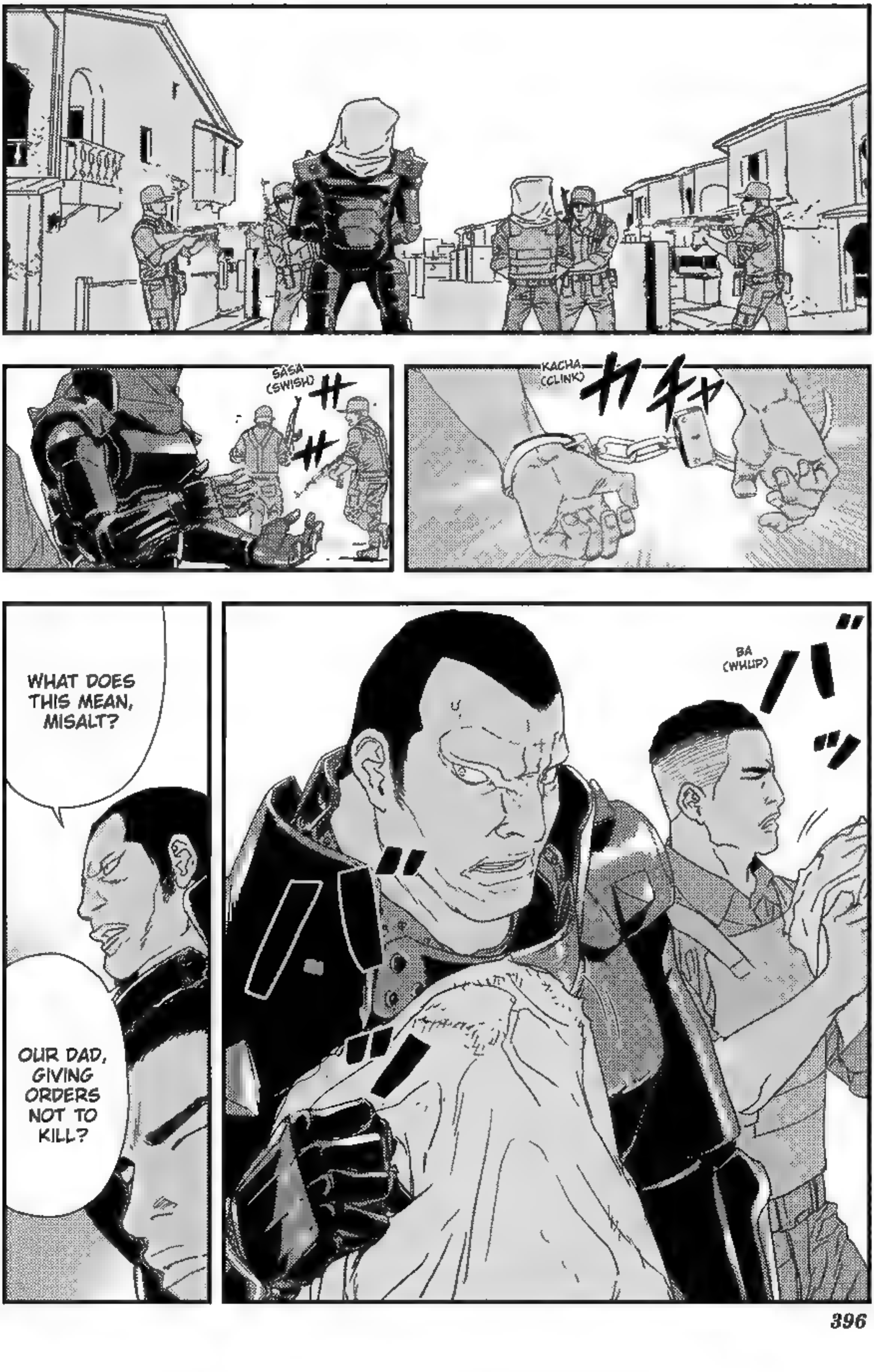

YOU ARE FREE TO TEAM UP, AND THE LAST TEN STANDING WILL HAVE THE RIGHT TO FACE ME OR RECEIVE THE MERCY OF EXPULSION FROM OUR BORDERS.
AND IN THE IMPOSSIBLE CASE THAT ONE OF YOU ACTUALLY DEFEATS ME, YOU WILL HAVE WHATEVER PRIZE YOU DESIRE.

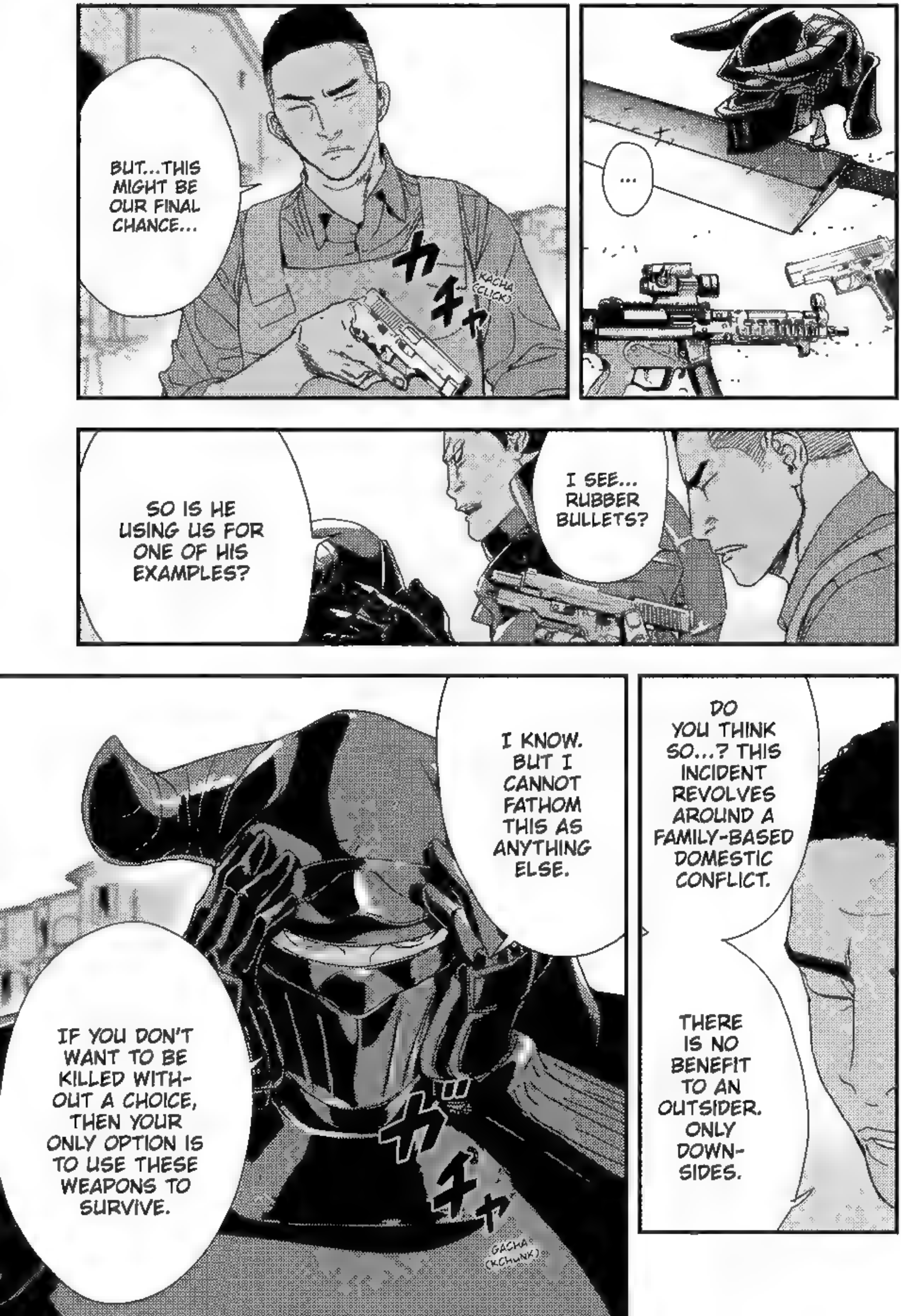

DID THEY HEAR ME OUTSIDE?

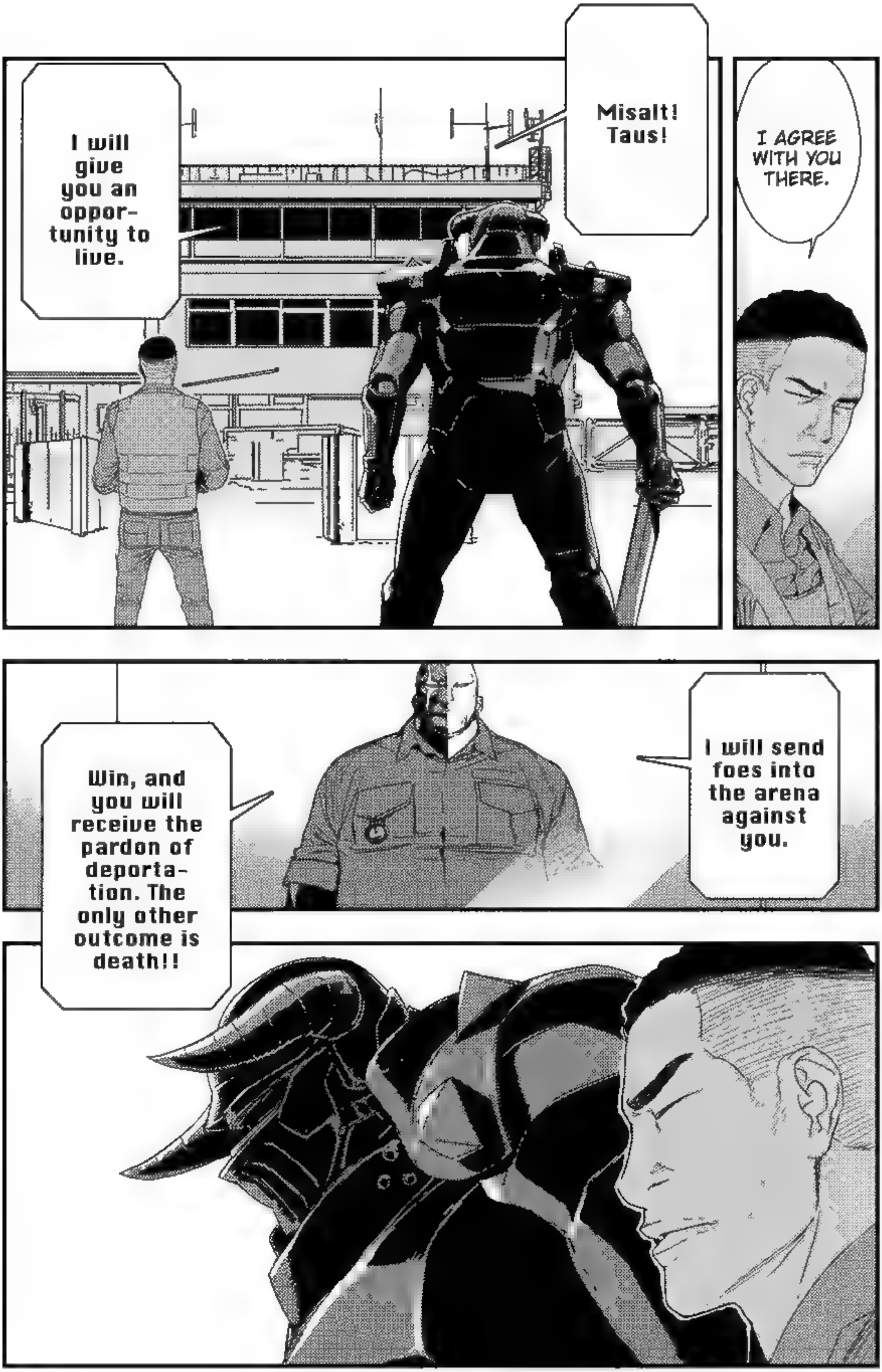

ガガ
GAGA (VMMM)

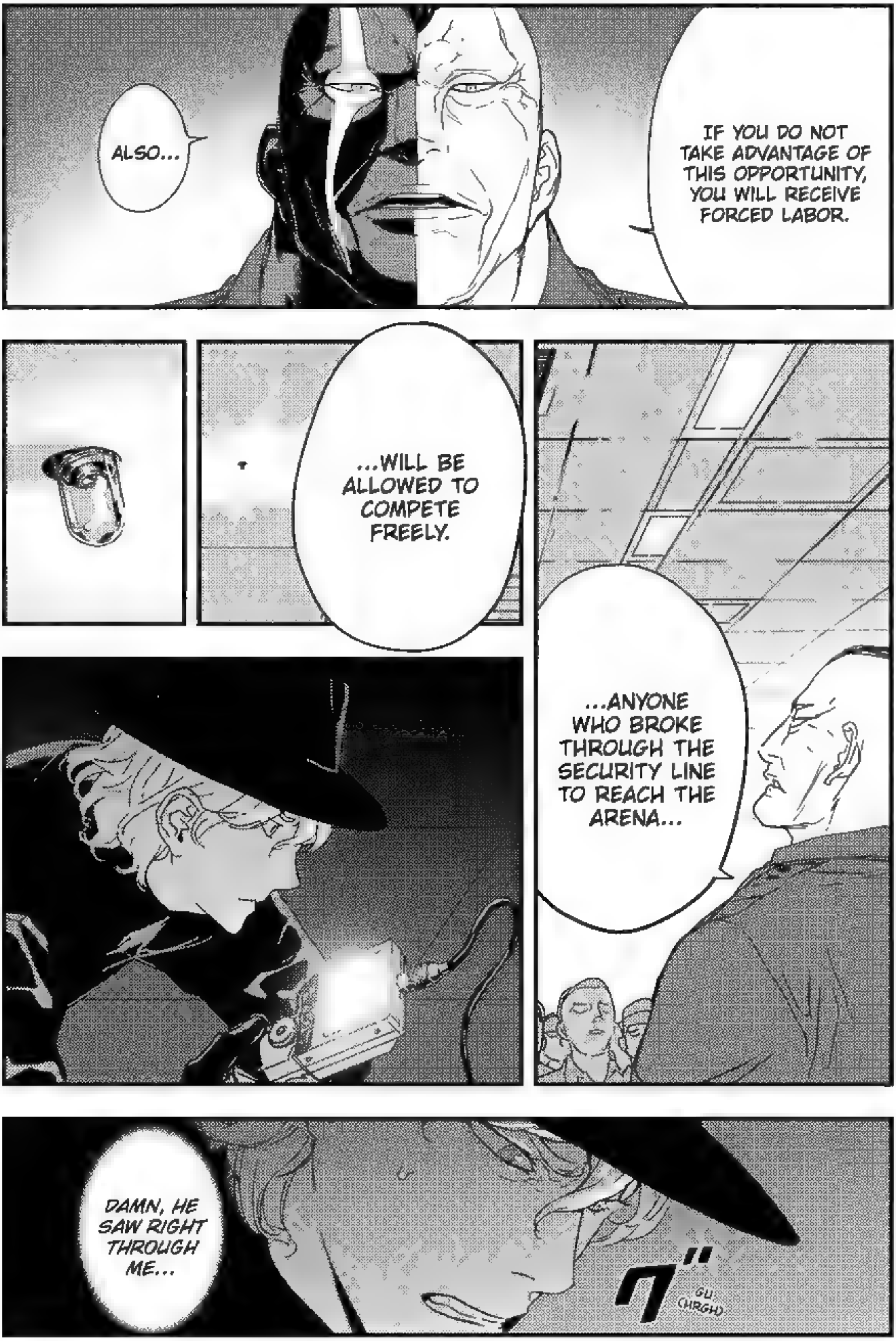

ガガ
GAGA

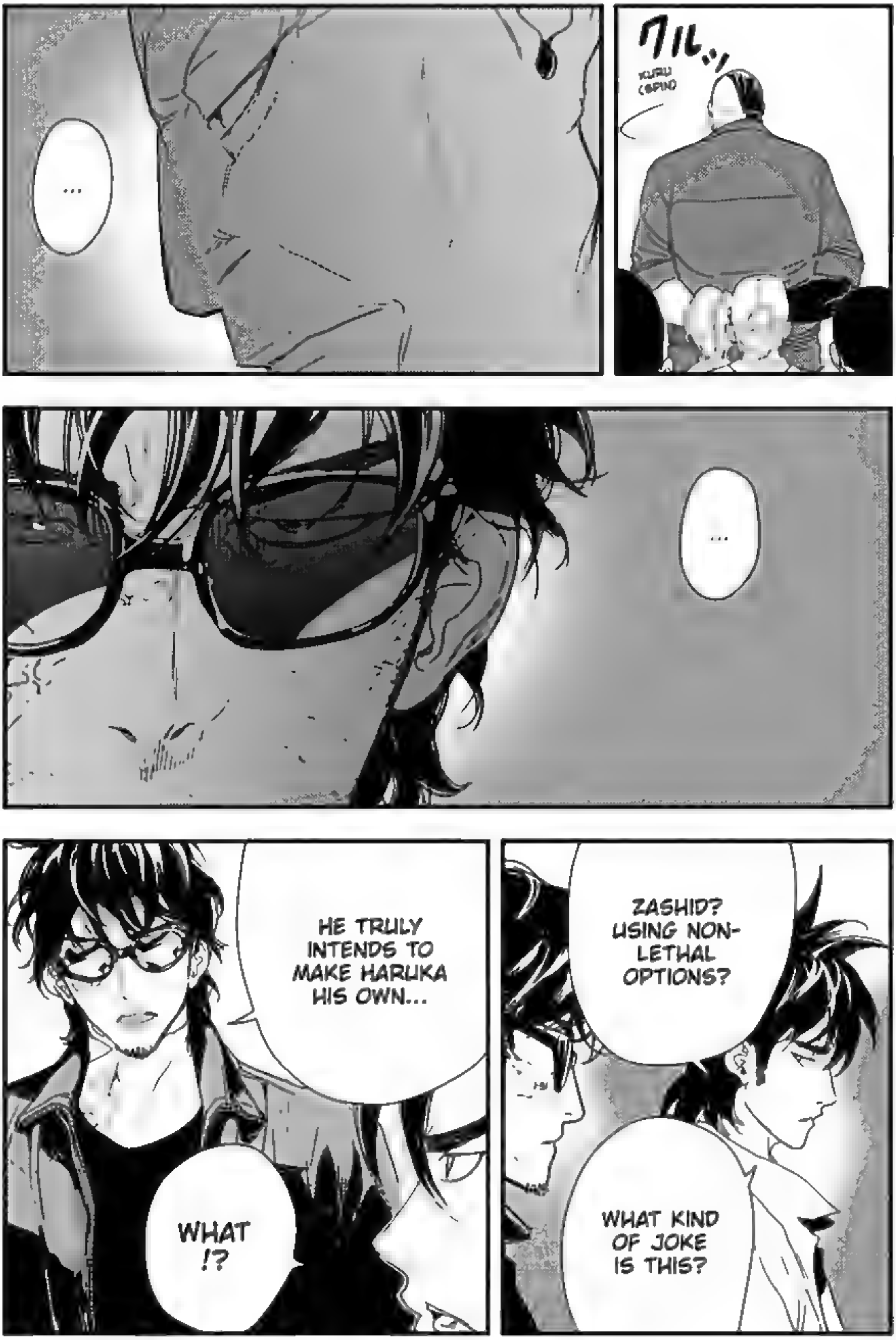

JAAAN (DA-DAH)

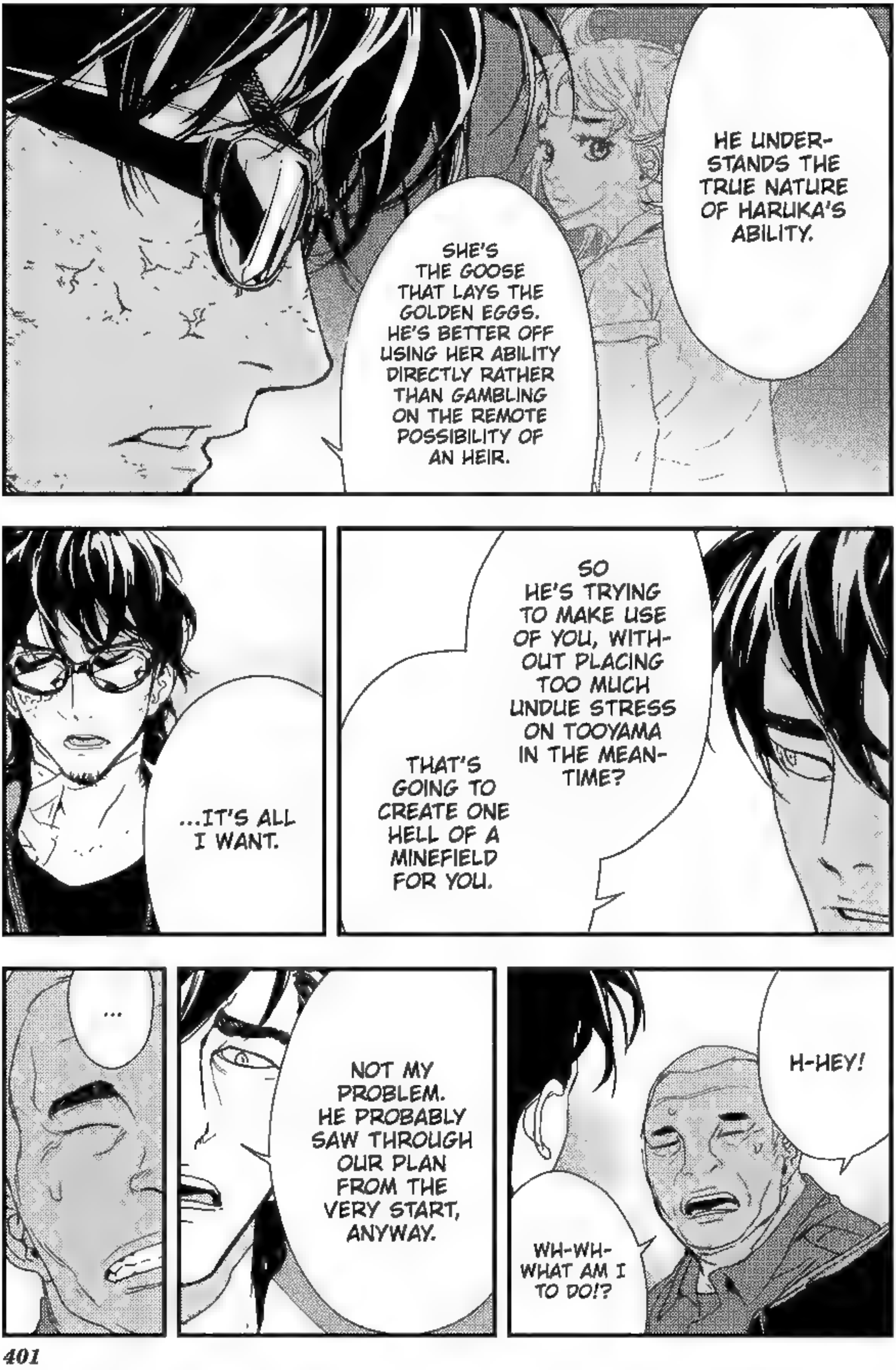

KACHA (CLINK)
カチャ
SASA (SWISH)
ササ
BA (WHUP)
バッ
WHAT DOES THIS MEAN, MISALT?
OUR DAD, GIVING ORDERS NOT TO KILL?

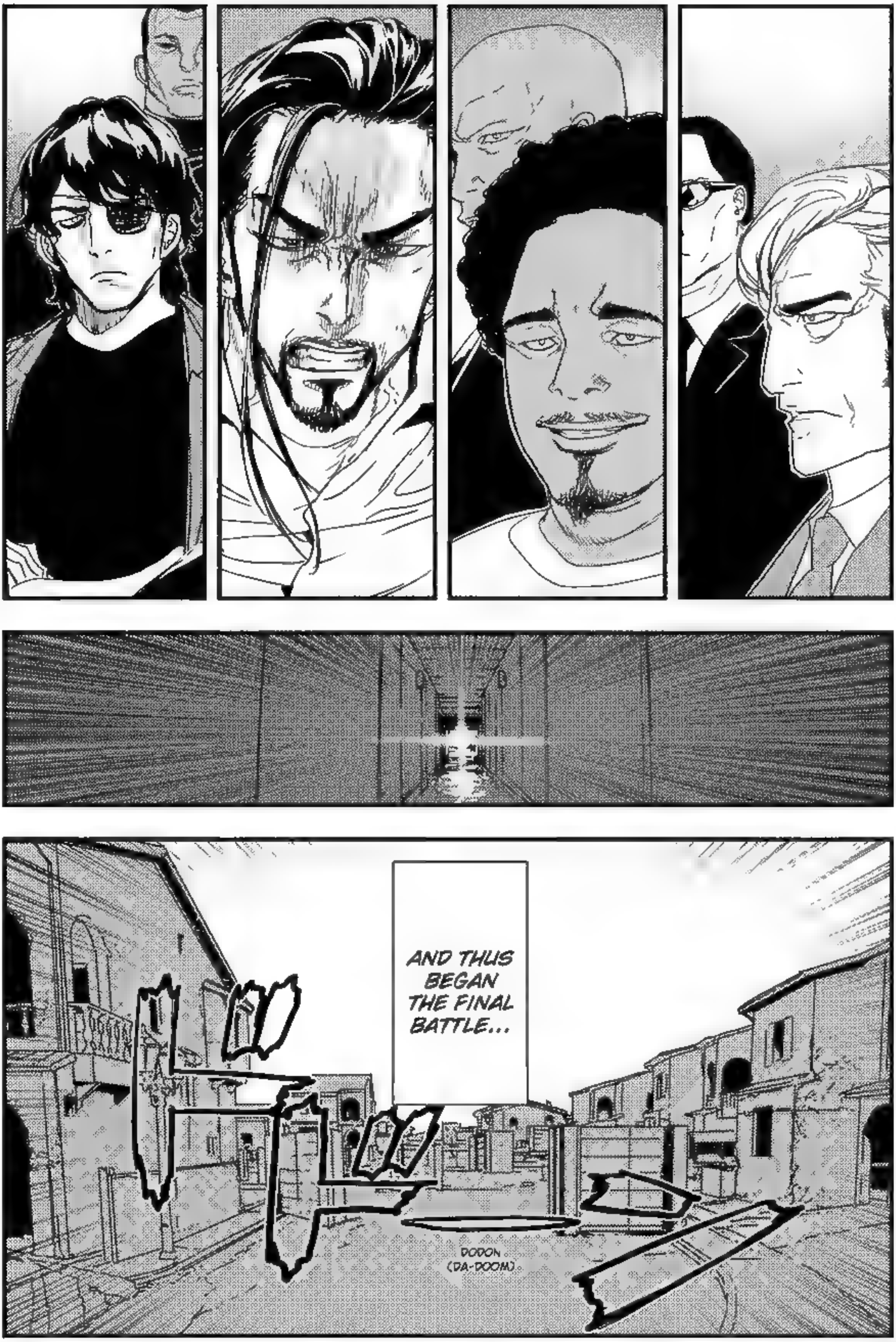

...
BUT...THIS MIGHT BE OUR FINAL CHANCE...
カチャ
KACHA (CLICK)
I SEE... RUBBER BULLETS?
SO IS HE USING US FOR ONE OF HIS EXAMPLES?
DO YOU THINK SO...? THIS INCIDENT REVOLVES AROUND A FAMILY-BASED DOMESTIC CONFLICT.
THERE IS NO BENEFIT TO AN OUTSIDER. ONLY DOWNSIDES.
I KNOW. BUT I CANNOT FATHOM THIS AS ANYTHING ELSE.
IF YOU DON'T WANT TO BE KILLED WITHOUT A CHOICE, THEN YOUR ONLY OPTION IS TO USE THESE WEAPONS TO SURVIVE.
GASHA (KCHUNK)

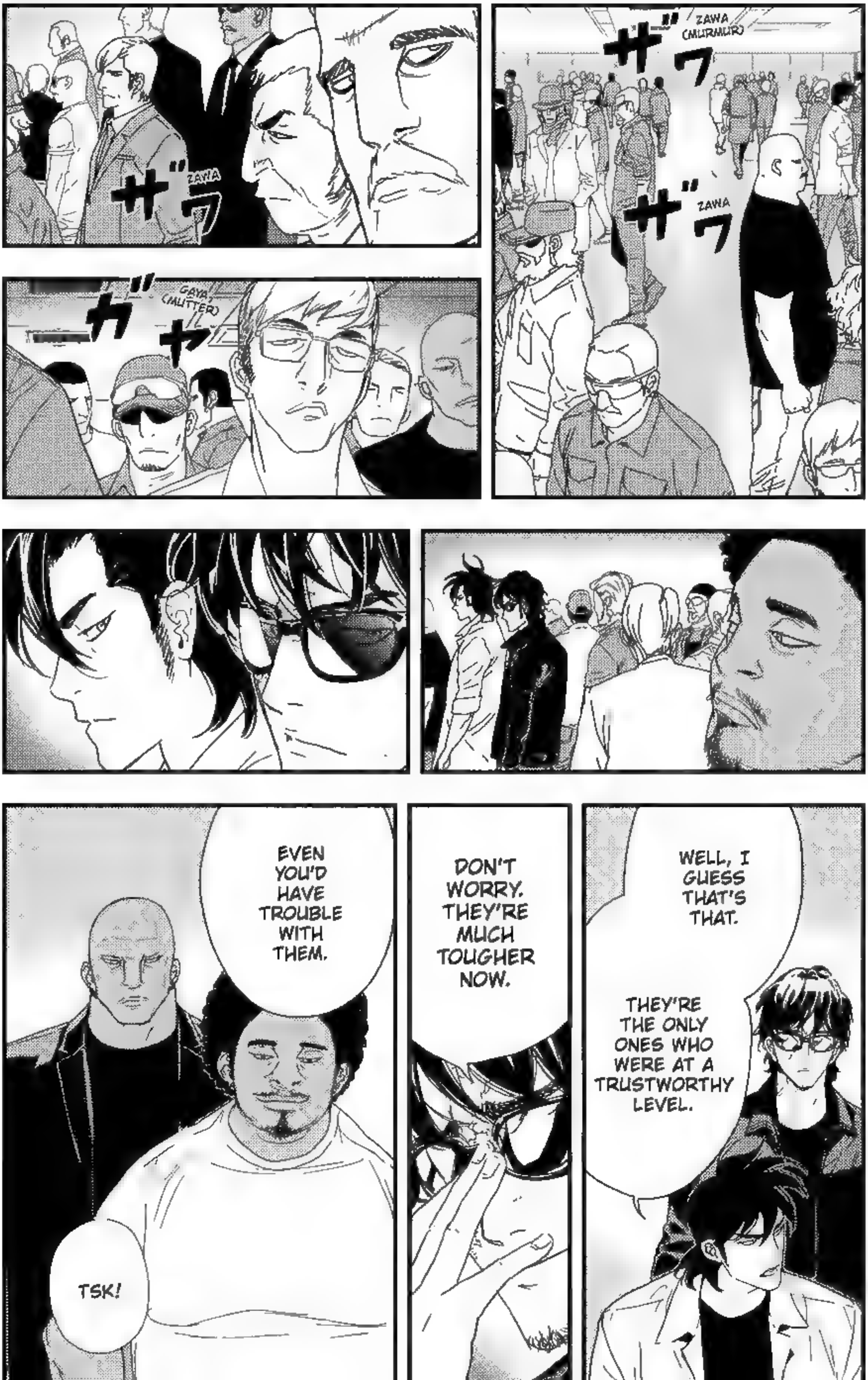

I AGREE WITH YOU THERE.
Misalt! Taus!
I will give you an opportunity to live.
I will send foes into the arena against you.
Win, and you will receive the pardon of deportation. The only other outcome is death!!

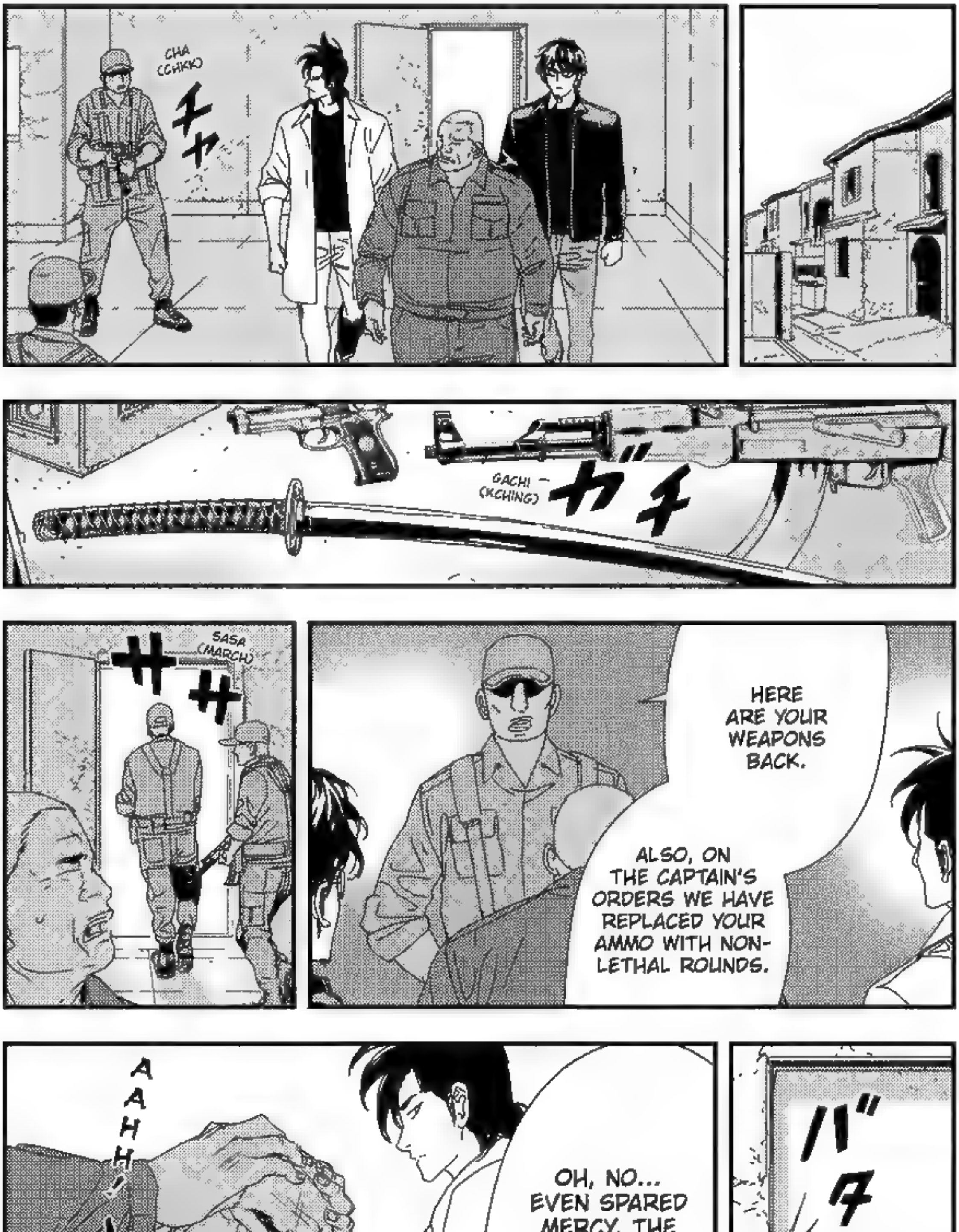

IF YOU DO NOT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS OPPORTUNITY, YOU WILL RECEIVE FORCED LABOR.
ALSO...
...ANYONE WHO BROKE THROUGH THE SECURITY LINE TO REACH THE ARENA...
...WILL BE ALLOWED TO COMPETE FREELY.
DAMN, HE SAW RIGHT THROUGH ME...
グ
GU (HRGH)

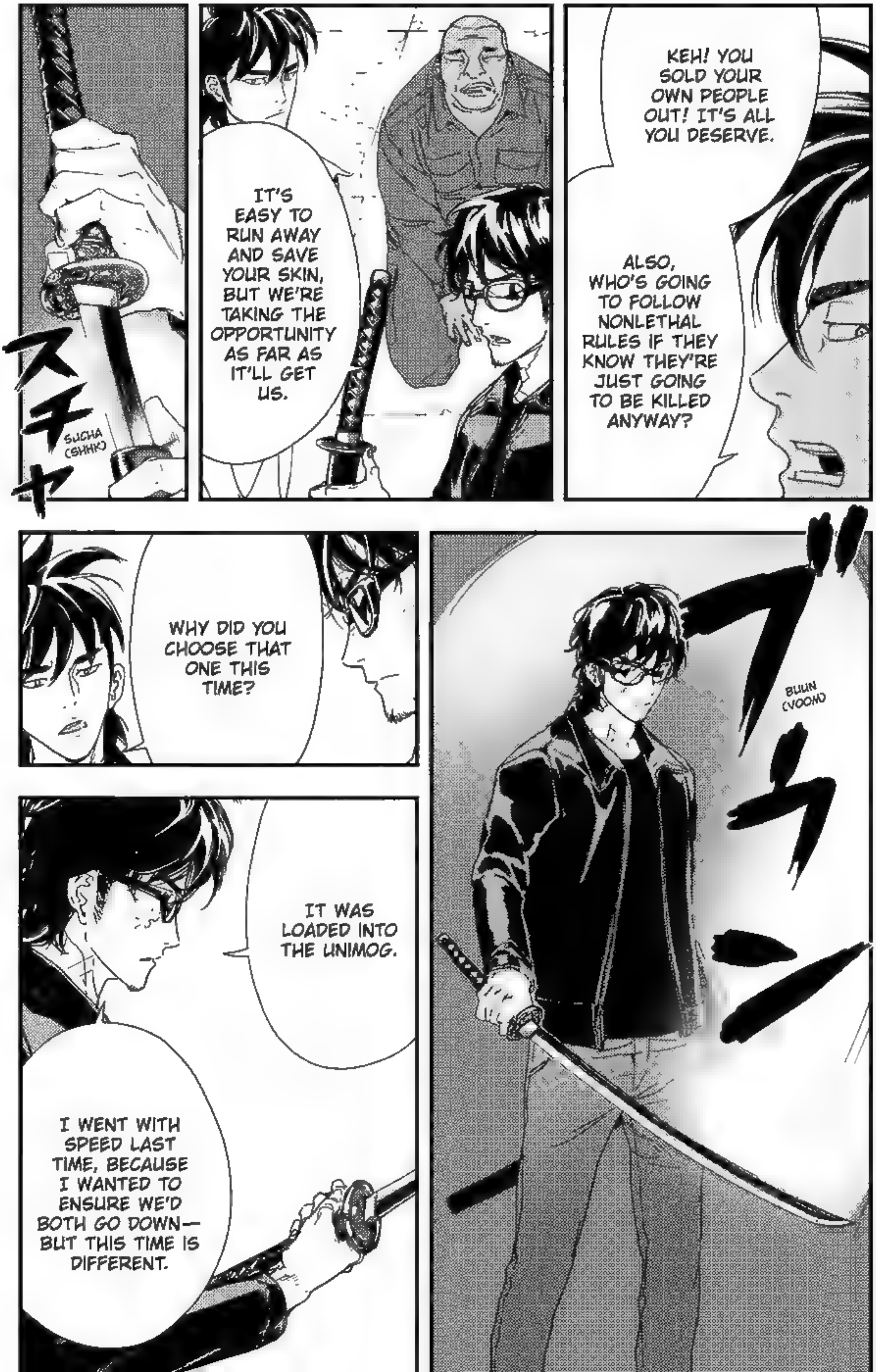

クル..
KURU (SPIN)
...
...
ZASHID? USING NON-LETHAL OPTIONS?
WHAT KIND OF JOKE IS THIS?
HE TRULY INTENDS TO MAKE HARUKA HIS OWN...
WHAT !?


HE UNDERSTANDS THE TRUE NATURE OF HARUKA'S ABILITY.
SHE'S THE GOOSE THAT LAYS THE GOLDEN EGGS. HE'S BETTER OFF USING HER ABILITY DIRECTLY RATHER THAN GAMBLING ON THE REMOTE POSSIBILITY OF AN HEIR.
SO HE'S TRYING TO MAKE USE OF YOU, WITHOUT PLACING TOO MUCH UNDUE STRESS ON TOOYAMA IN THE MEANTIME?
THAT'S GOING TO CREATE ONE HELL OF A MINEFIELD FOR YOU.
...IT'S ALL I WANT.
H-HEY!
WH-WH-WHAT AM I TO DO!?
NOT MY PROBLEM. HE PROBABLY SAW THROUGH OUR PLAN FROM THE VERY START, ANYWAY.
...

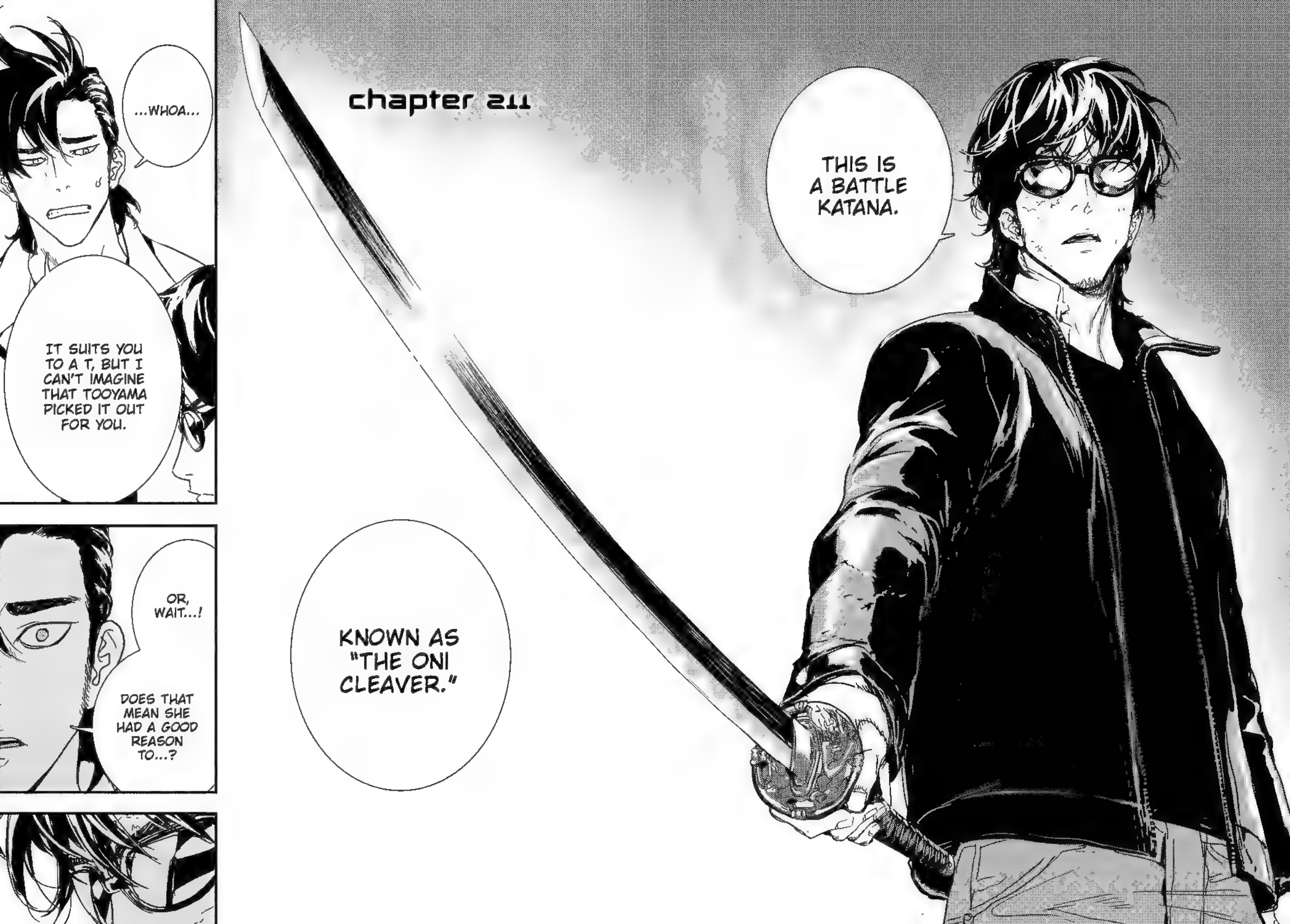

AND THUS BEGAN THE FINAL BATTLE...
DODON (DA-DOOM)

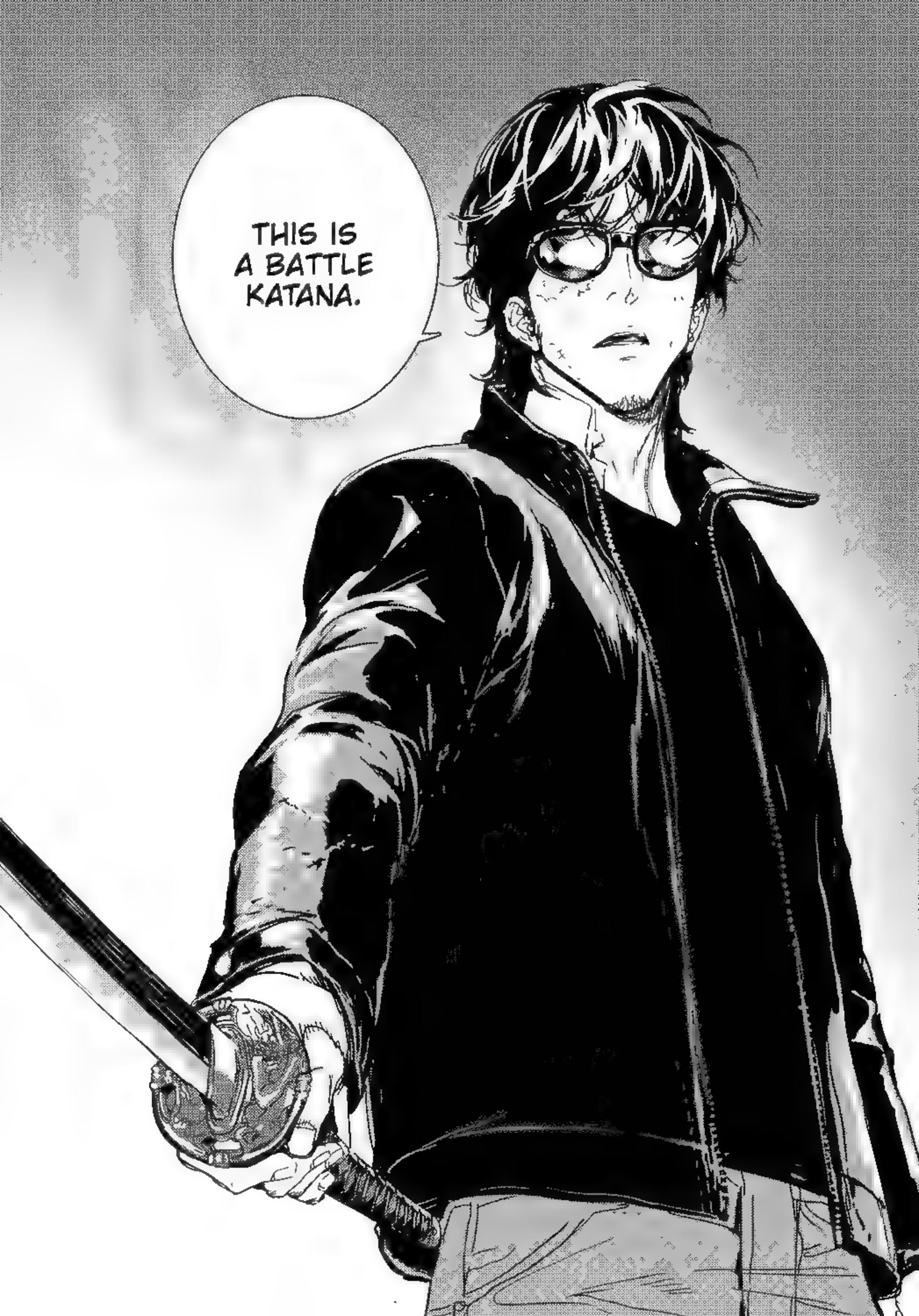
ザワ
ZAWA
ガヤ
GAYA (MUTTER)
ザワ
ZAWA (MURMUR)
ザワ
ZAWA
EVEN YOU'D HAVE TROUBLE WITH THEM.
TSK!
DON'T WORRY. THEY'RE MUCH TOUGHER NOW.
WELL, I GUESS THAT'S THAT.
THEY'RE THE ONLY ONES WHO WERE AT A TRUSTWORTHY LEVEL.


チャ
CHA (CHKK)
ガチ
GACHI (KCHING)
HERE ARE YOUR WEAPONS BACK.
ALSO, ON THE CAPTAIN'S ORDERS WE HAVE REPLACED YOUR AMMO WITH NON-LETHAL ROUNDS.
ササ
SASA (MARCH)
バタン
BATAN (SLAM)
OH, NO... EVEN SPARED MERCY, THE ONLY FATE THAT AWAITS ME IS A LABOR CAMP...
AAHH–

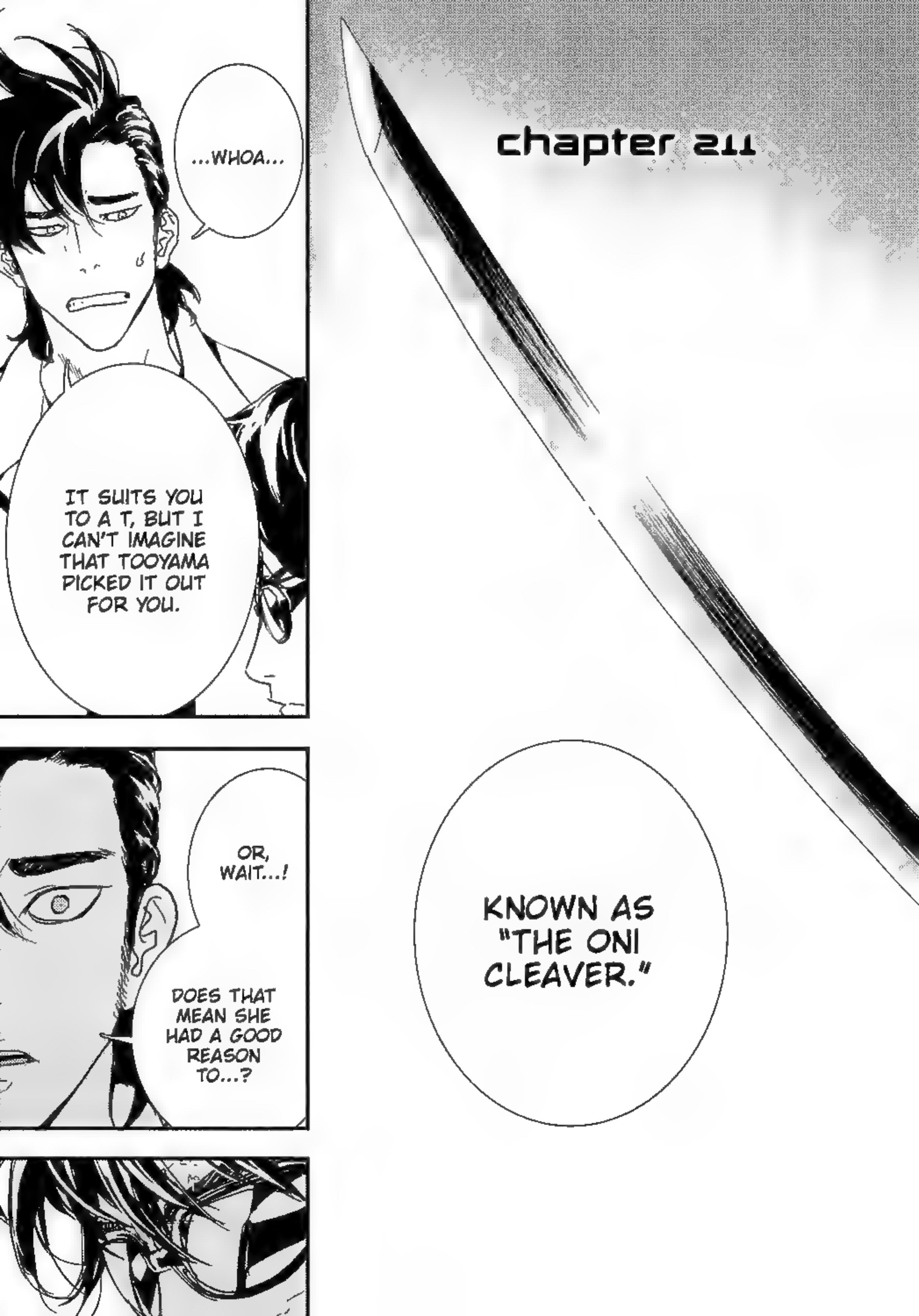

KEH! YOU SOLD YOUR OWN PEOPLE OUT! IT'S ALL YOU DESERVE.
ALSO, WHO'S GOING TO FOLLOW NONLETHAL RULES IF THEY KNOW THEY'RE JUST GOING TO BE KILLED ANYWAY?
IT'S EASY TO RUN AWAY AND SAVE YOUR SKIN, BUT WE'RE TAKING THE OPPORTUNITY AS FAR AS IT'LL GET US.
スチャ
SUCHA (SHHK)
ブゥン
BUUN (VOOM)
WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THAT ONE THIS TIME?
IT WAS LOADED INTO THE UNIMOG.
I WENT WITH SPEED LAST TIME, BECAUSE I WANTED TO ENSURE WE'D BOTH GO DOWN—BUT THIS TIME IS DIFFERENT.

chapter 211


THIS IS A BATTLE KATANA.
KNOWN AS "THE ONI CLEAVER."
...WHOA...
IT SUITS YOU TO A T, BUT I CAN'T IMAGINE THAT TOOYAMA PICKED IT OUT FOR YOU.
OR, WAIT...!
DOES THAT MEAN SHE HAD A GOOD REASON TO...?


THIS IS A BATTLE KATANA.

chapter 211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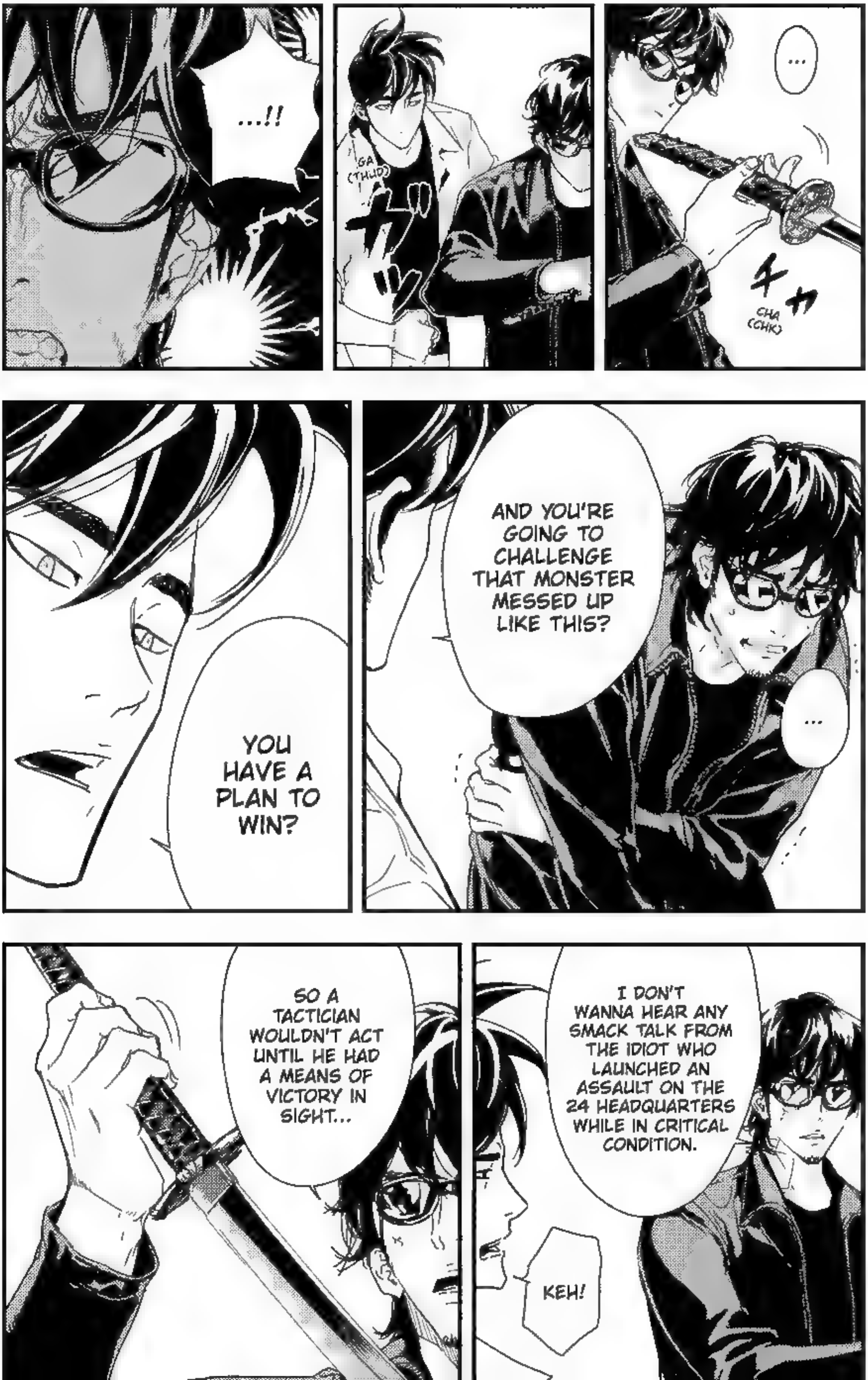
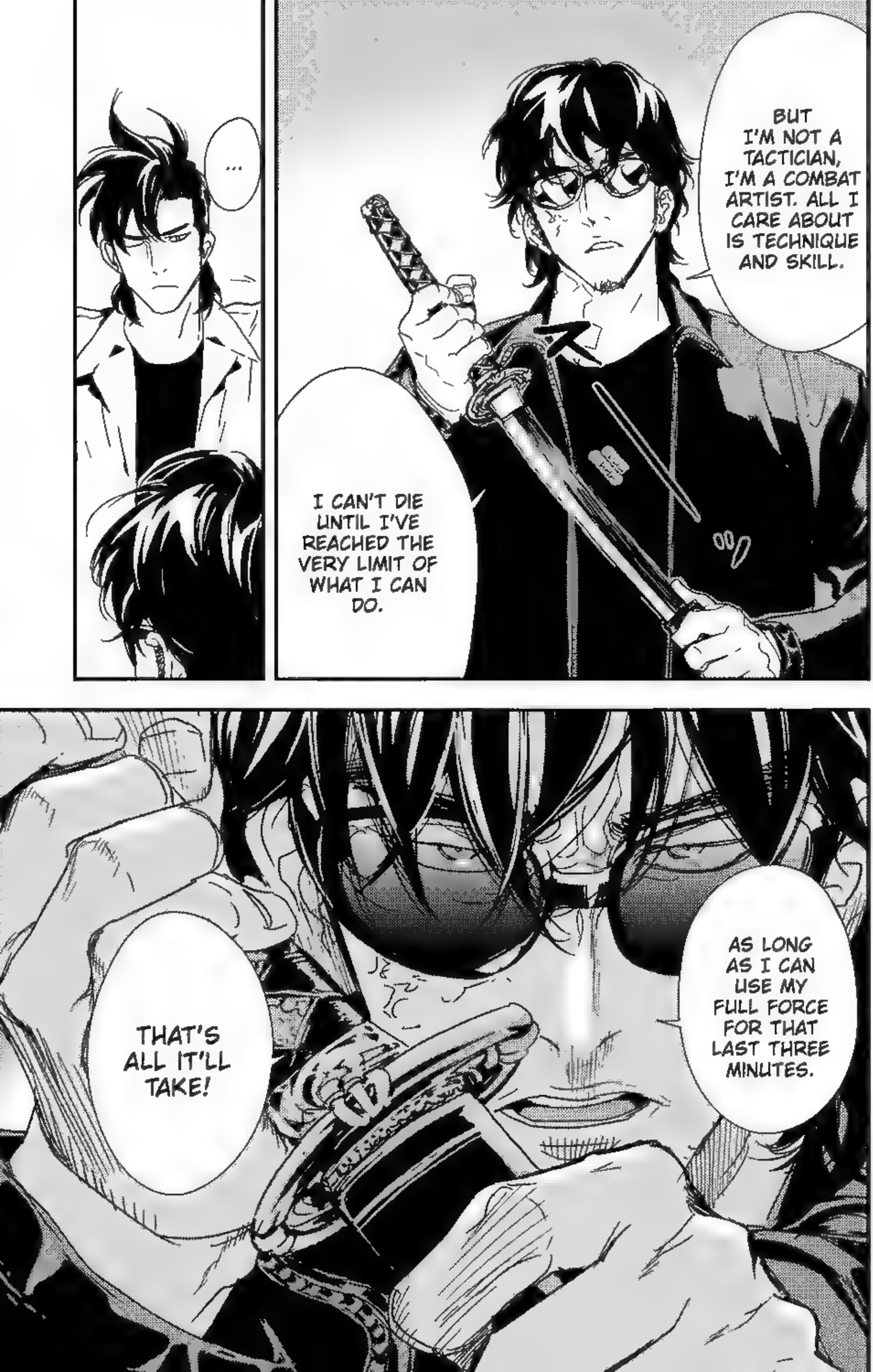
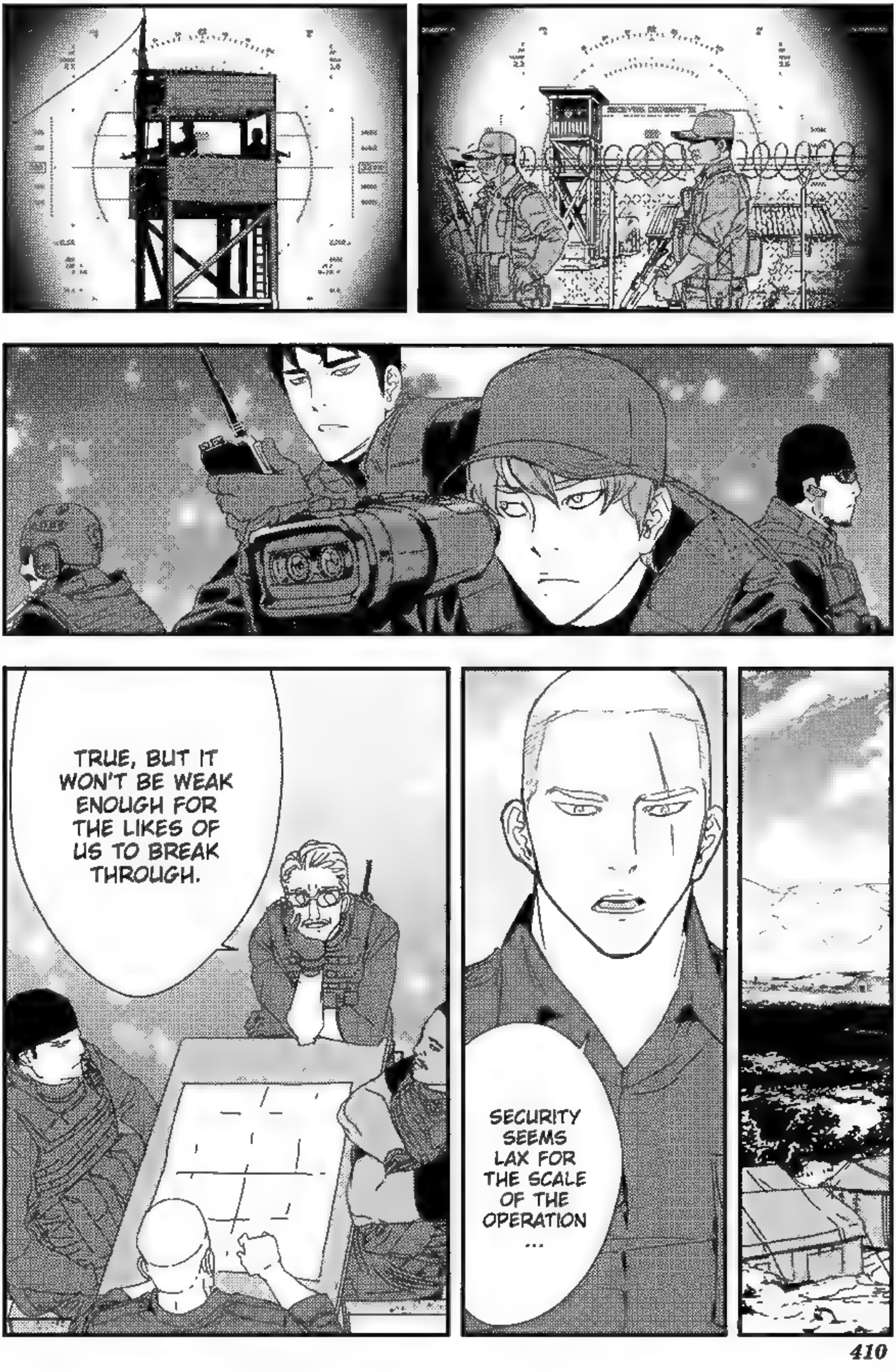
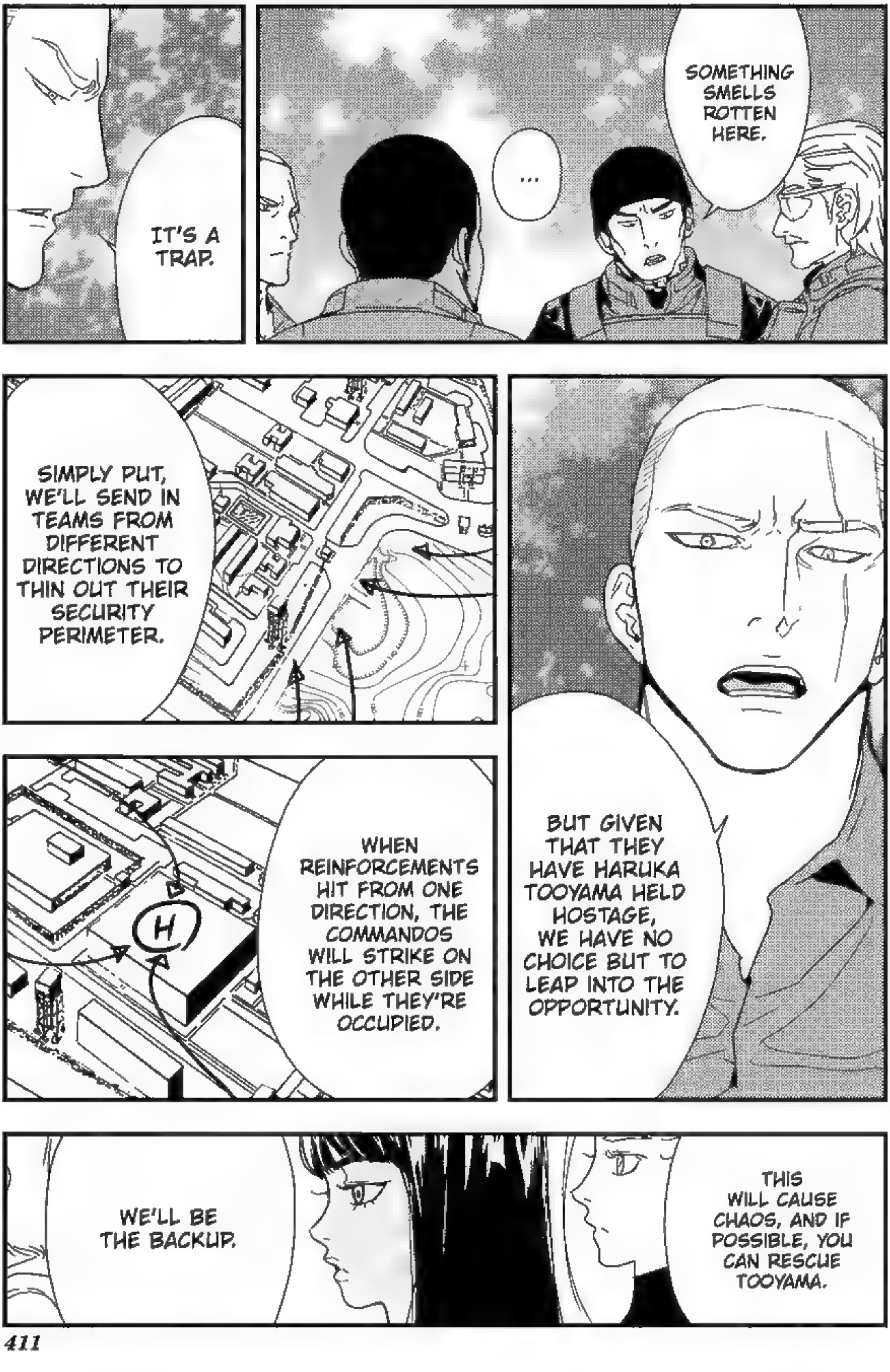
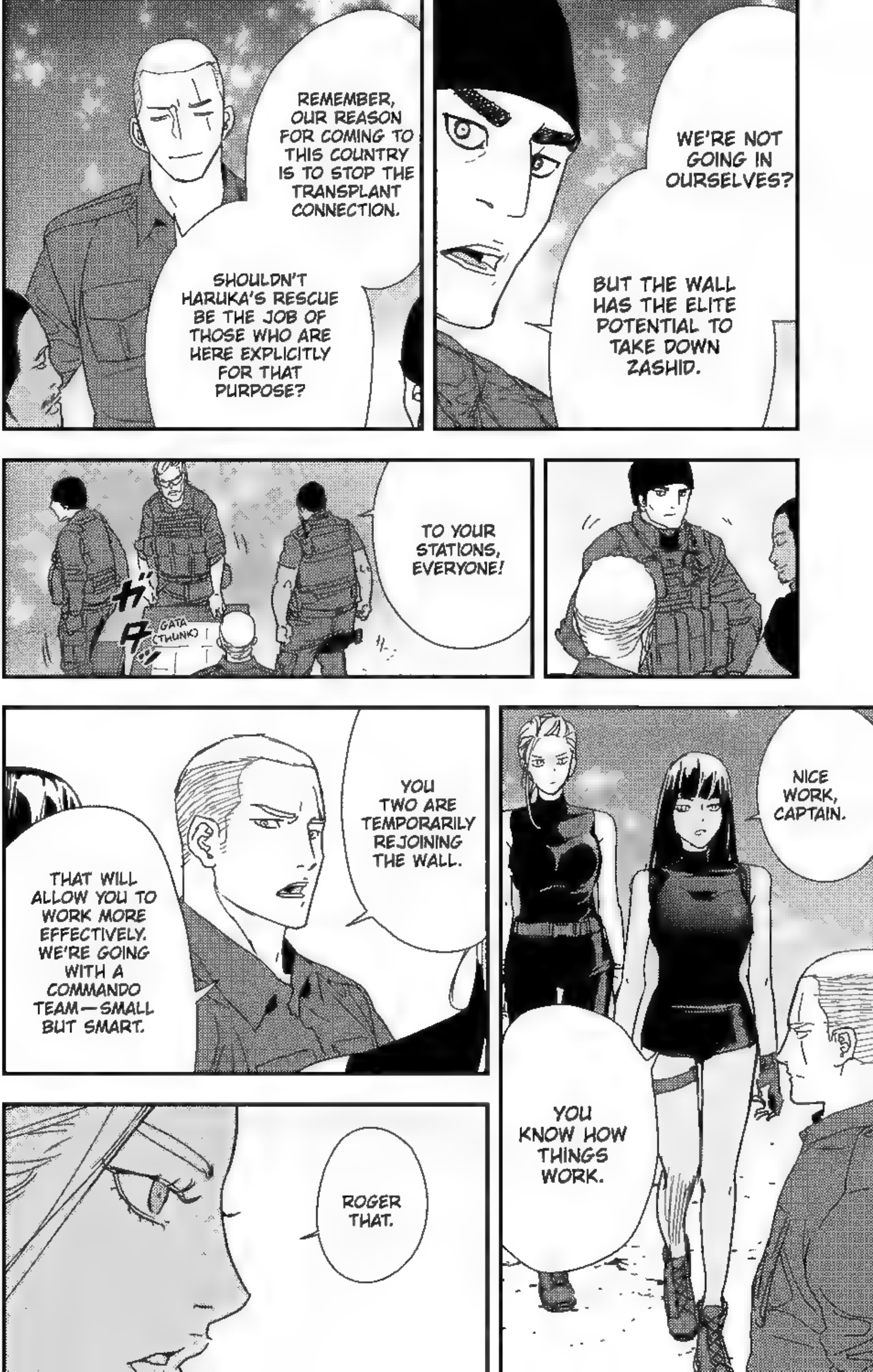
OR, WAIT...!
DOES THAT MEAN SHE HAD A GOOD REASON TO...?

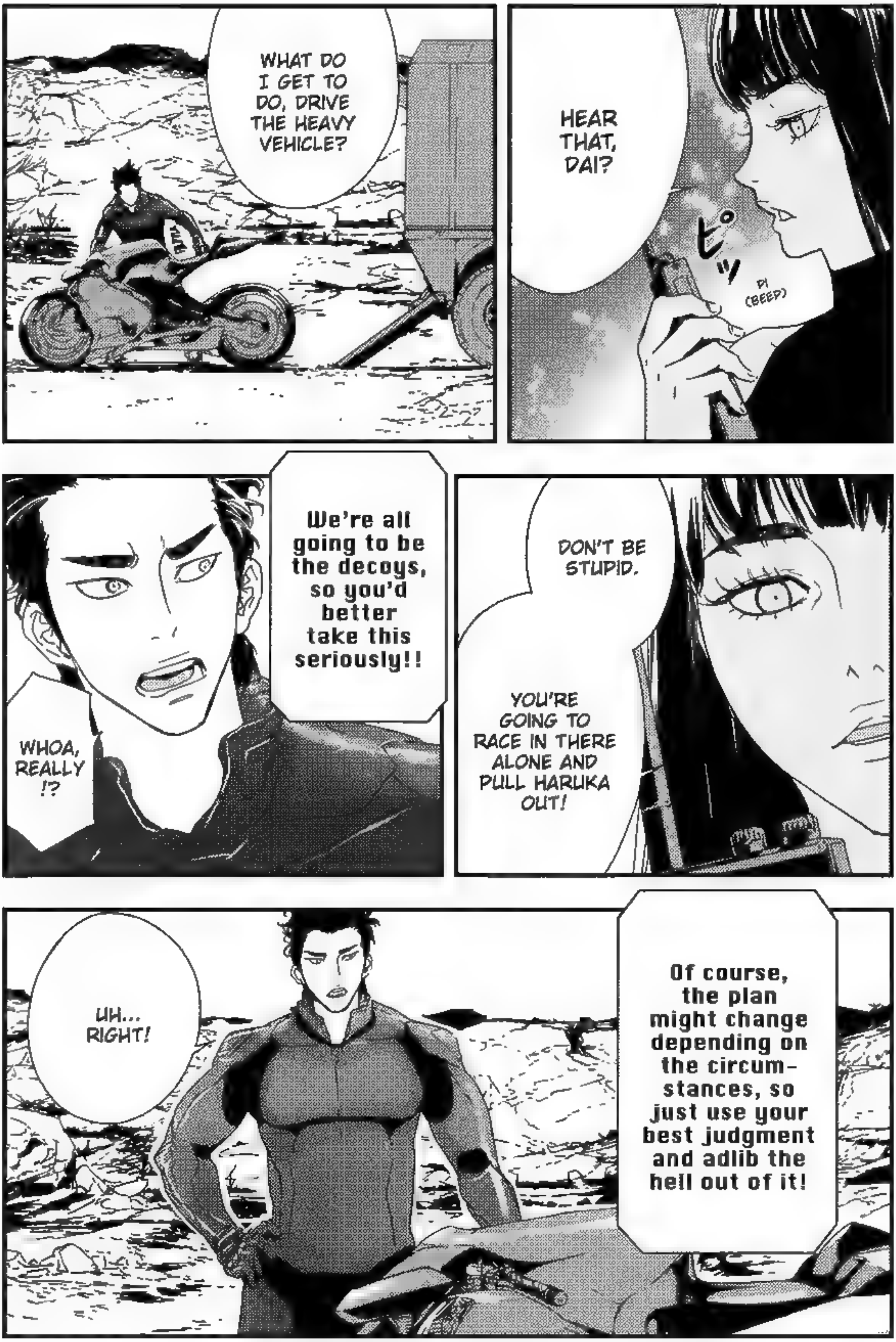

...
CHA (CHK)
GA (THUD)
...!!
AND YOU'RE GOING TO CHALLENGE THAT MONSTER MESSED UP LIKE THIS?
...
YOU HAVE A PLAN TO WIN?
I DON'T WANNA HEAR ANY SMACK TALK FROM THE IDIOT WHO LAUNCHED AN ASSAULT ON THE 24 HEADQUARTERS WHILE IN CRITICAL CONDITION.
KEH!
SO A TACTICIAN WOULDN'T ACT UNTIL HE HAD A MEANS OF VICTORY IN SIGHT...

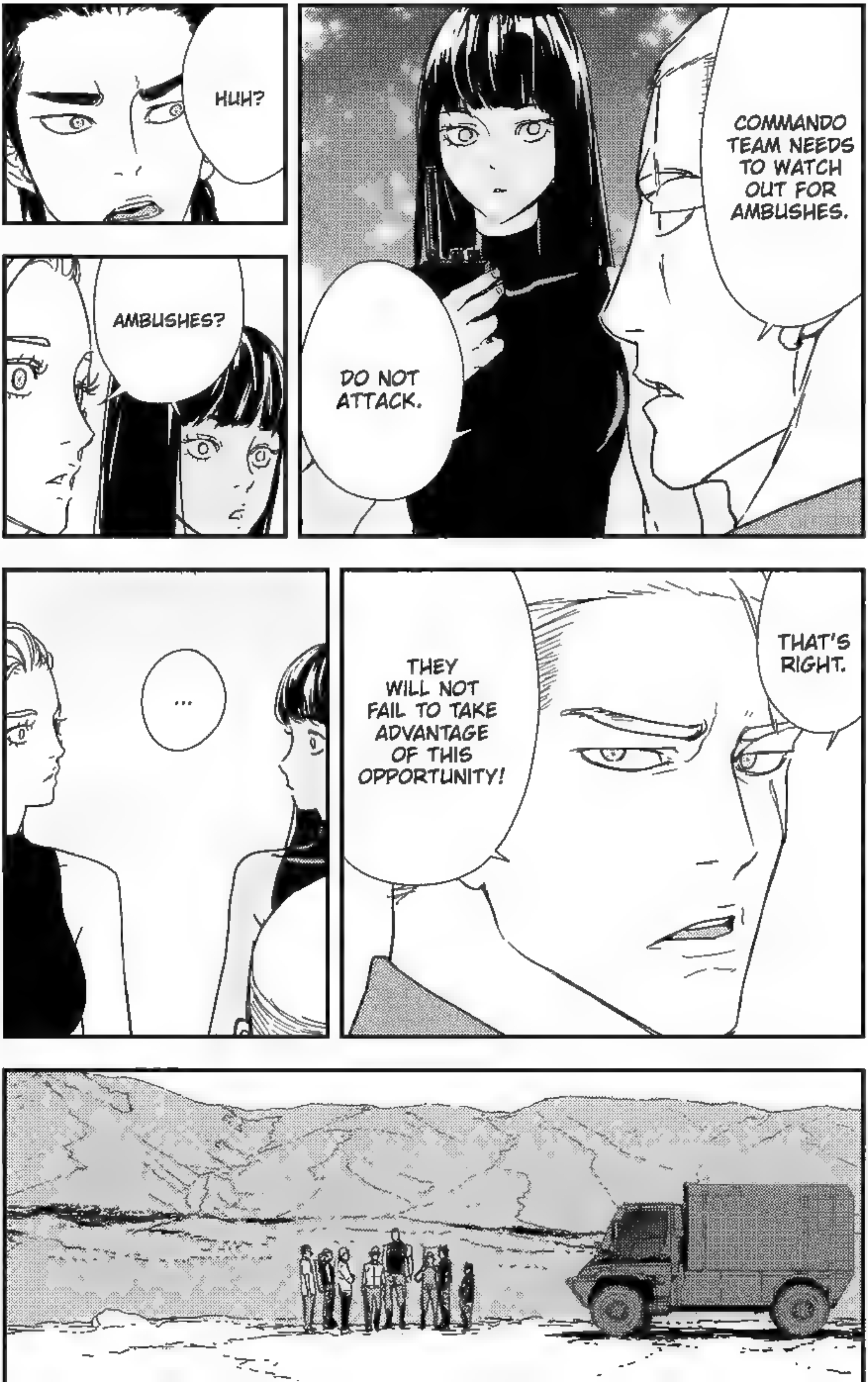

BUT I'M NOT A TACTICIAN, I'M A COMBAT ARTIST. ALL I CARE ABOUT IS TECHNIQUE AND SKILL.
I CAN'T DIE UNTIL I'VE REACHED THE VERY LIMIT OF WHAT I CAN DO.
...
AS LONG AS I CAN USE MY FULL FORCE FOR THAT LAST THREE MINUTES.
THAT'S ALL IT'LL TAKE!

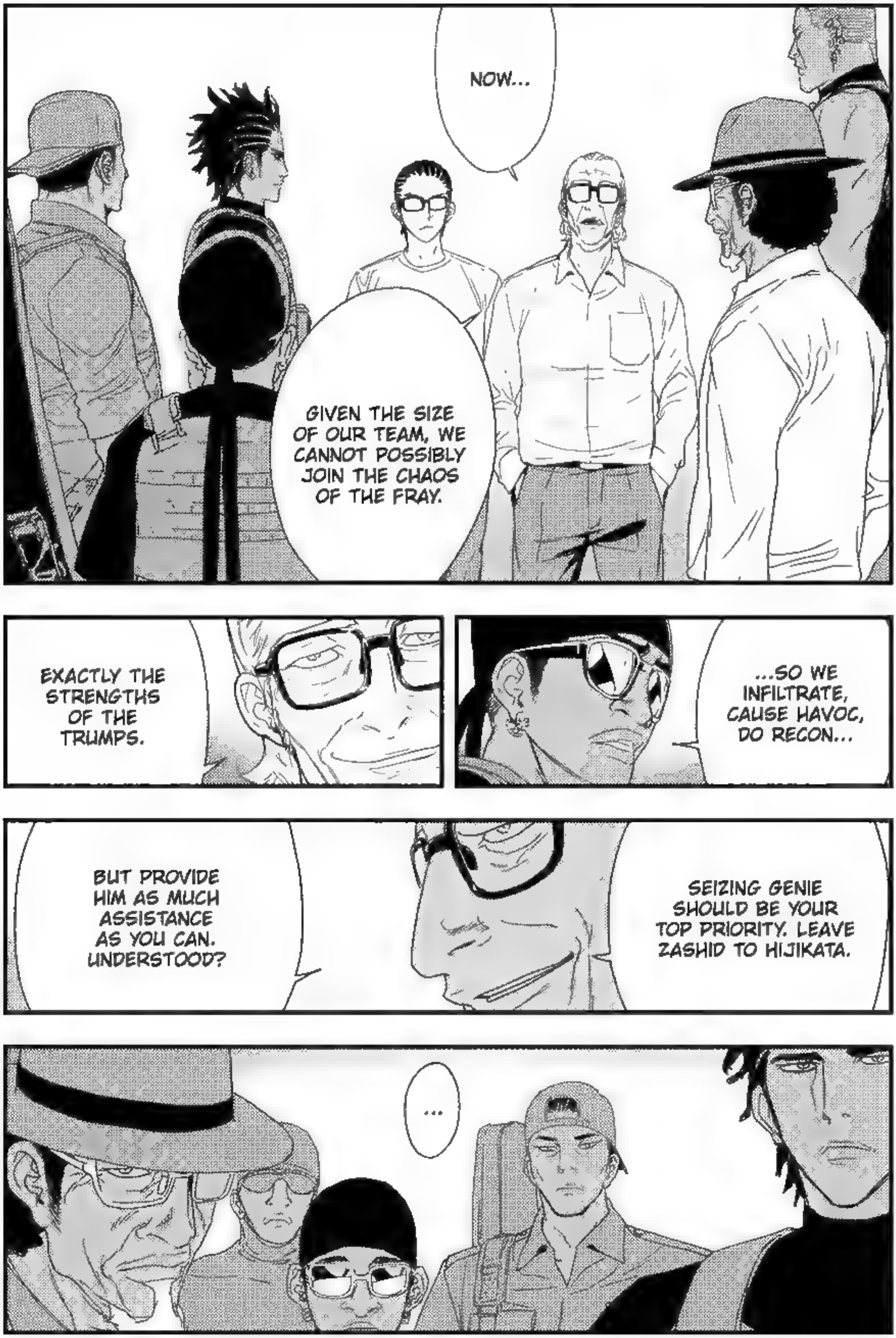

SECURITY SEEMS LAX FOR THE SCALE OF THE OPERATION ...
TRUE, BUT IT WON'T BE WEAK ENOUGH FOR THE LIKES OF US TO BREAK THROUGH.

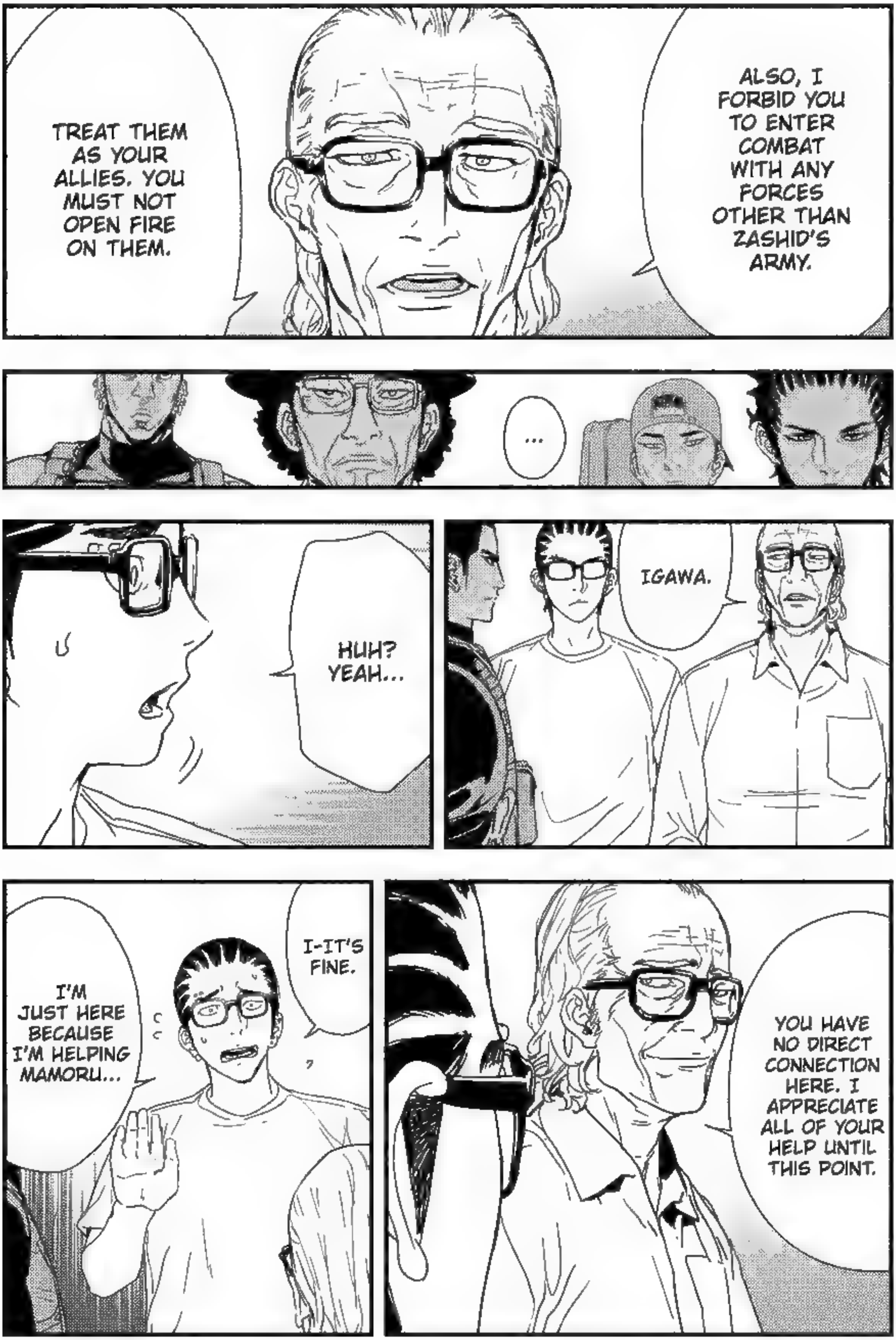

SOMETHING SMELLS ROTTEN HERE.
...
IT'S A TRAP.
BUT GIVEN THAT THEY HAVE HARUKA TOOYAMA HELD HOSTAGE, WE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO LEAP INTO THE OPPORTUNITY.
SIMPLY PUT, WE'LL SEND IN TEAMS FROM DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS TO THIN OUT THEIR SECURITY PERIMETER.
H
WHEN REINFORCEMENTS HIT FROM ONE DIRECTION, THE COMMANDOS WILL STRIKE ON THE OTHER SIDE WHILE THEY'RE OCCUPIED.
THIS WILL CAUSE CHAOS, AND IF POSSIBLE, YOU CAN RESCUE TOOYAMA.
WE'LL BE THE BACKUP.

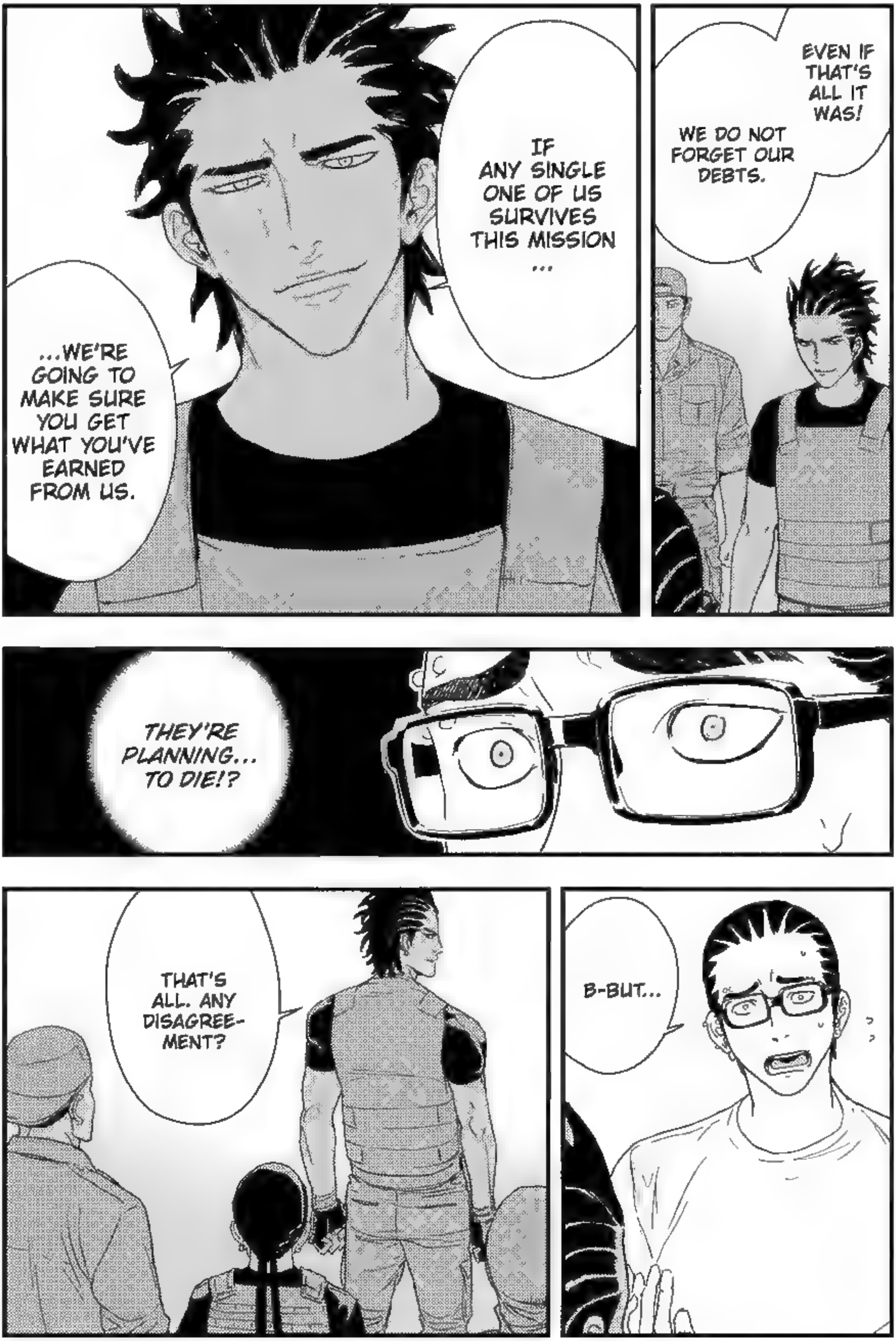

WE'RE NOT GOING IN OURSELVES?
BUT THE WALL HAS THE ELITE POTENTIAL TO TAKE DOWN ZASHID.
REMEMBER, OUR REASON FOR COMING TO THIS COUNTRY IS TO STOP THE TRANSPLANT CONNECTION.
SHOULDN'T HARUKA'S RESCUE BE THE JOB OF THOSE WHO ARE HERE EXPLICITLY FOR THAT PURPOSE?
TO YOUR STATIONS, EVERYONE!
ガタ
GATA (THUNK)
NICE WORK, CAPTAIN.
YOU KNOW HOW THINGS WORK.
YOU TWO ARE TEMPORARILY REJOINING THE WALL.
THAT WILL ALLOW YOU TO WORK MORE EFFECTIVELY. WE'RE GOING WITH A COMMANDO TEAM—SMALL BUT SMART.
ROGER THAT.

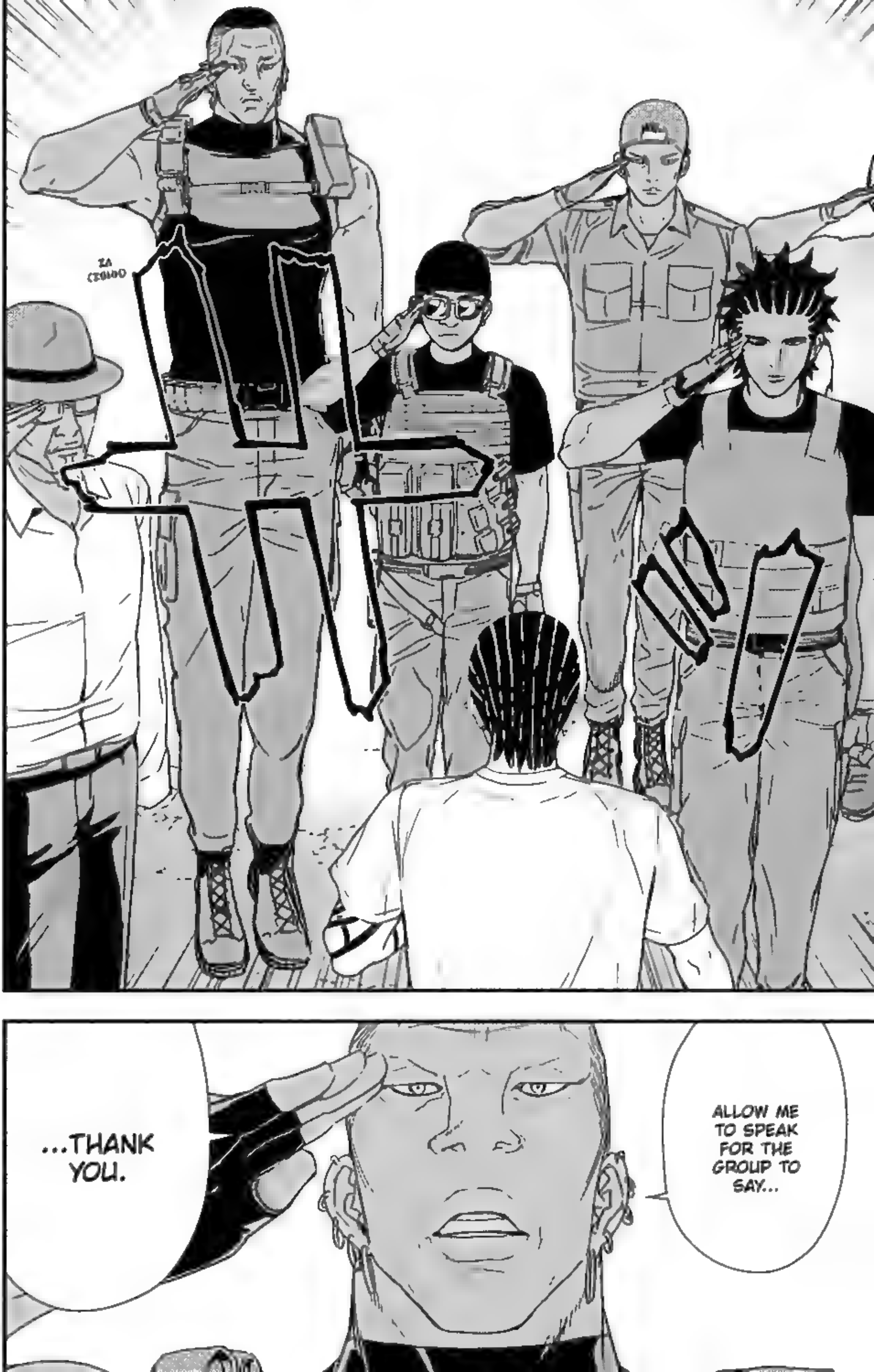

HEAR THAT, DAI?
ピッ
PI (BEEP)
WHAT DO I GET TO DO, DRIVE THE HEAVY VEHICLE?
DON'T BE STUPID.
YOU'RE GOING TO RACE IN THERE ALONE AND PULL HARUKA OUT!
We're all going to be the decoys, so you'd better take this seriously!!
WHOA, REALLY!?
Of course, the plan might change depending on the circumstances, so just use your best judgment and adlib the hell out of it!
UH... RIGHT!

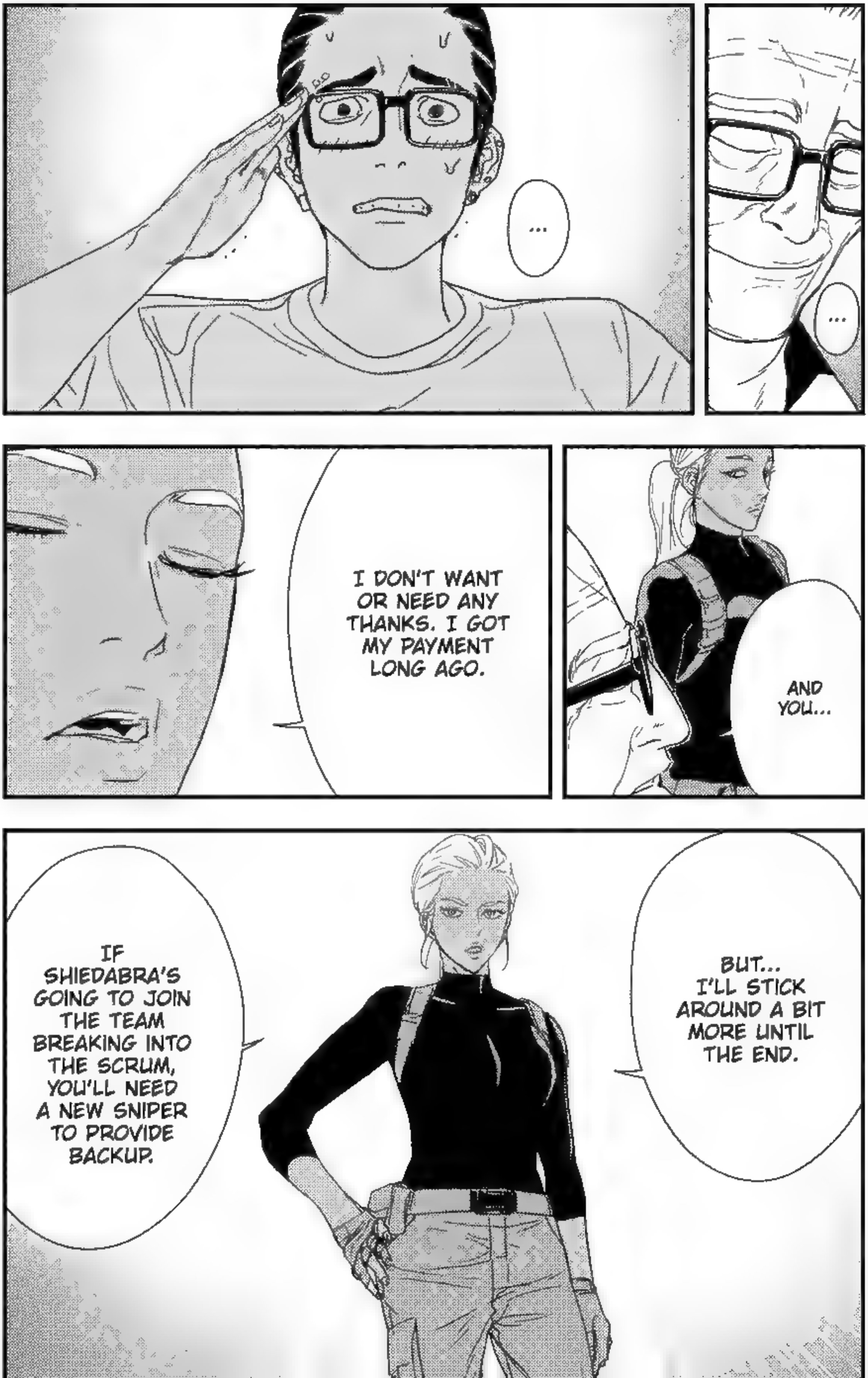

COMMANDO TEAM NEEDS TO WATCH OUT FOR AMBUSHES.
DO NOT ATTACK.
HUH?
AMBUSHES?
THAT'S RIGHT.
THEY WILL NOT FAIL TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS OPPORTUNITY!
...

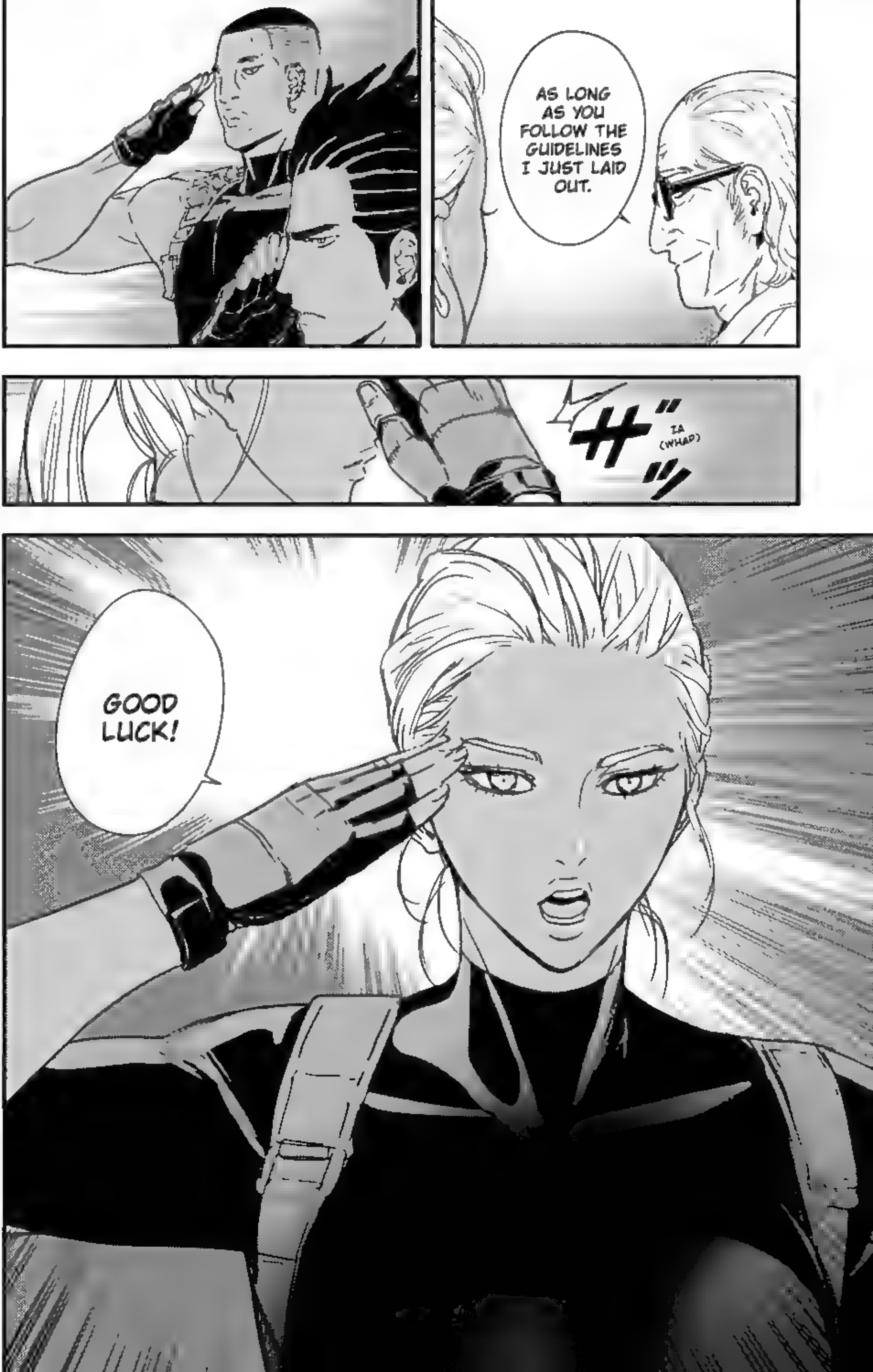

NOW...
GIVEN THE SIZE OF OUR TEAM, WE CANNOT POSSIBLY JOIN THE CHAOS OF THE FRAY.
...SO WE INFILTRATE, CAUSE HAVOC, DO RECON...
EXACTLY THE STRENGTHS OF THE TRUMPS.
SEIZING GENIE SHOULD BE YOUR TOP PRIORITY. LEAVE ZASHID TO HIJIKATA.
BUT PROVIDE HIM AS MUCH ASSISTANCE AS YOU CAN. UNDERSTOOD?
...

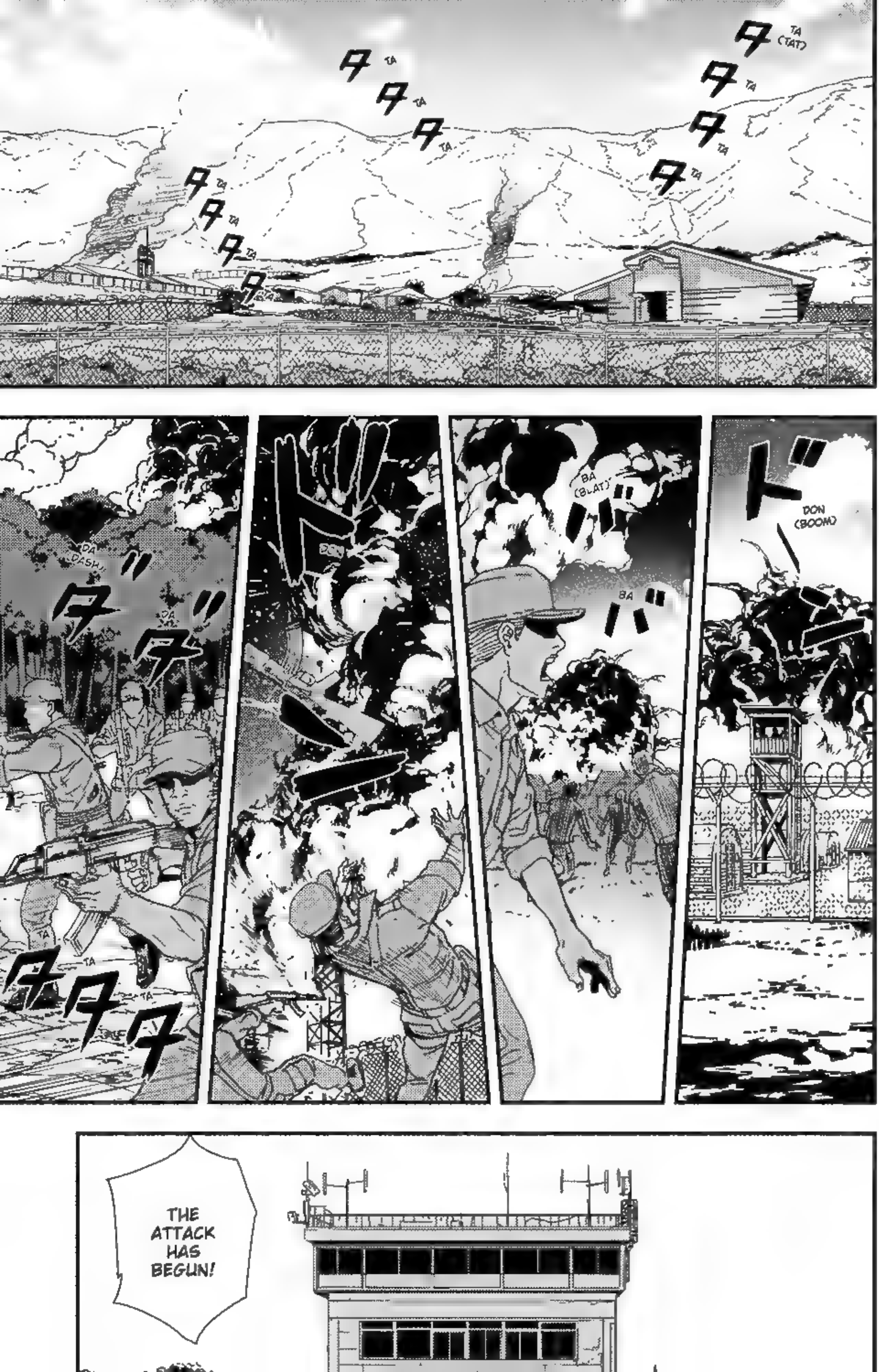

TREAT THEM AS YOUR ALLIES. YOU MUST NOT OPEN FIRE ON THEM.
ALSO, I FORBID YOU TO ENTER COMBAT WITH ANY FORCES OTHER THAN ZASHID'S ARMY.
...
IGAWA.
HUH? YEAH...
YOU HAVE NO DIRECT CONNECTION HERE. I APPRECIATE ALL OF YOUR HELP UNTIL THIS POINT.
I-IT'S FINE.
I'M JUST HERE BECAUSE I'M HELPING MAMORU...

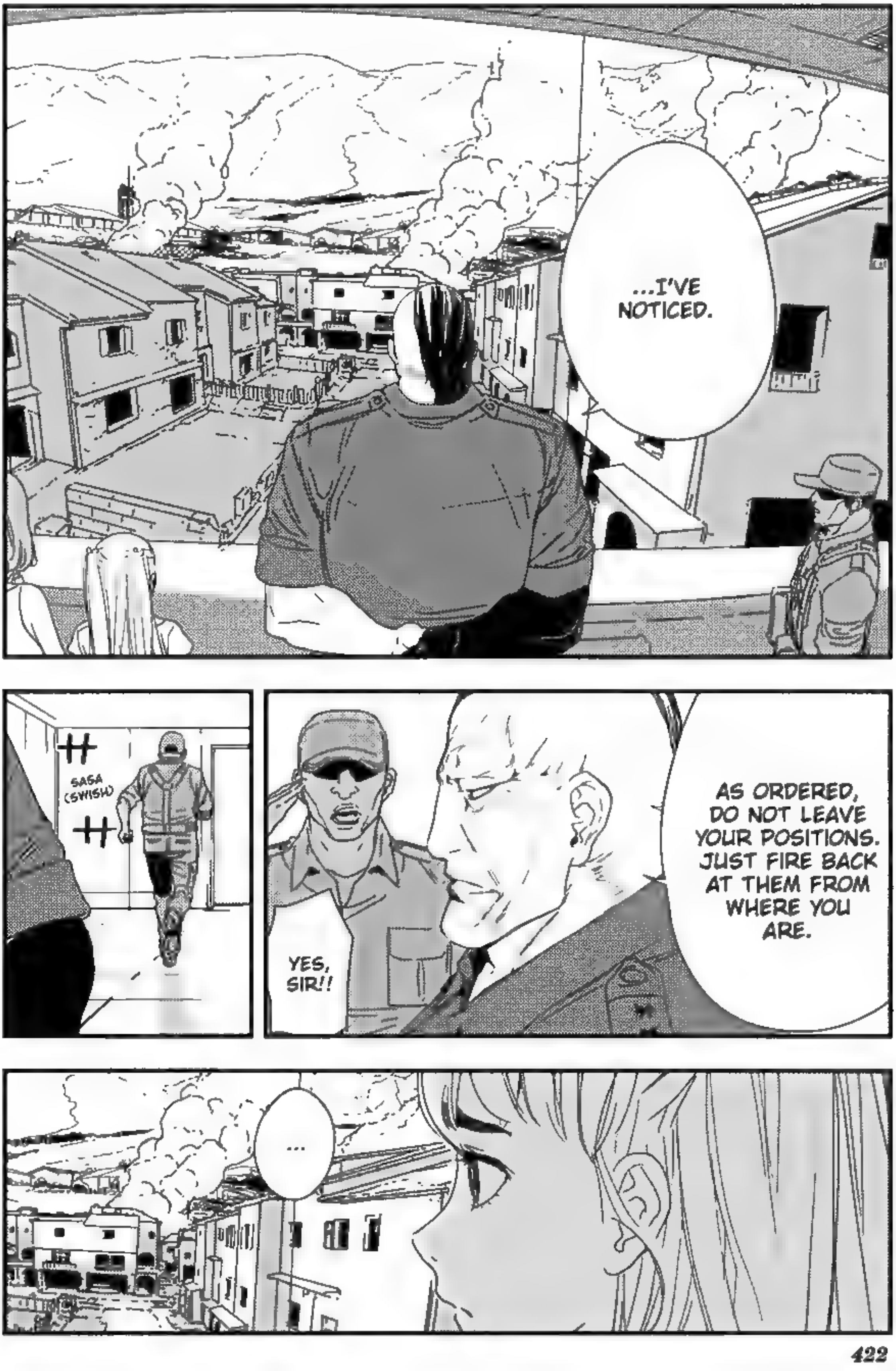

IF ANY SINGLE ONE OF US SURVIVES THIS MISSION ...
...WE'RE GOING TO MAKE SURE YOU GET WHAT YOU'VE EARNED FROM US.
WE DO NOT FORGET OUR DEBTS.
EVEN IF THAT'S ALL IT WAS!
THEY'RE PLANNING... TO DIE!?
THAT'S ALL. ANY DISAGREEMENT?
B-BUT...

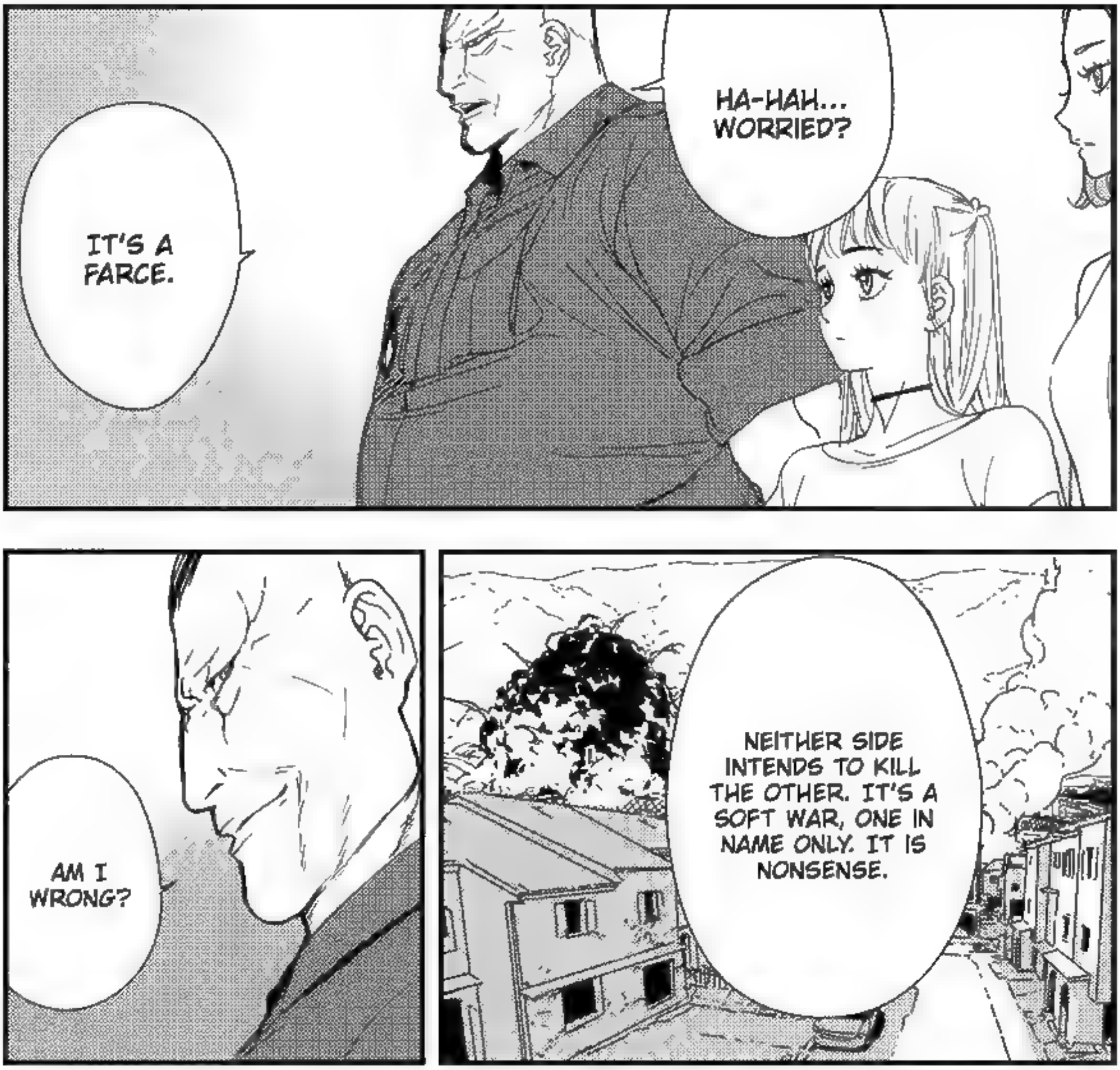

ZA
ALLOW ME TO SPEAK FOR THE GROUP TO SAY...
...THANK YOU.

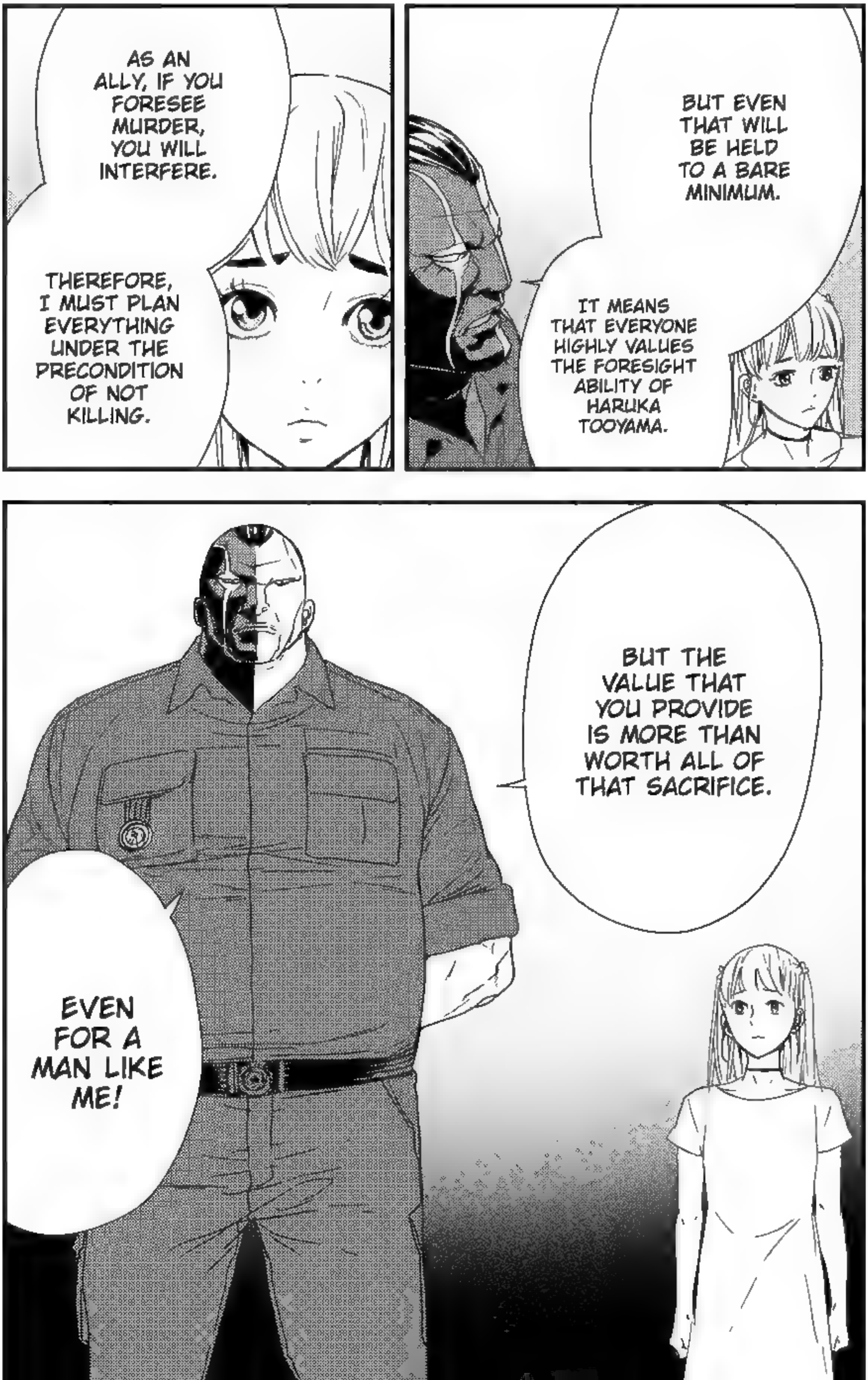

...
...
AND YOU...
I DON'T WANT OR NEED ANY THANKS. I GOT MY PAYMENT LONG AGO.
BUT... I'LL STICK AROUND A BIT MORE UNTIL THE END.
IF SHIEDABRA'S GOING TO JOIN THE TEAM BREAKING INTO THE SCRUM, YOU'LL NEED A NEW SNIPER TO PROVIDE BACKUP.

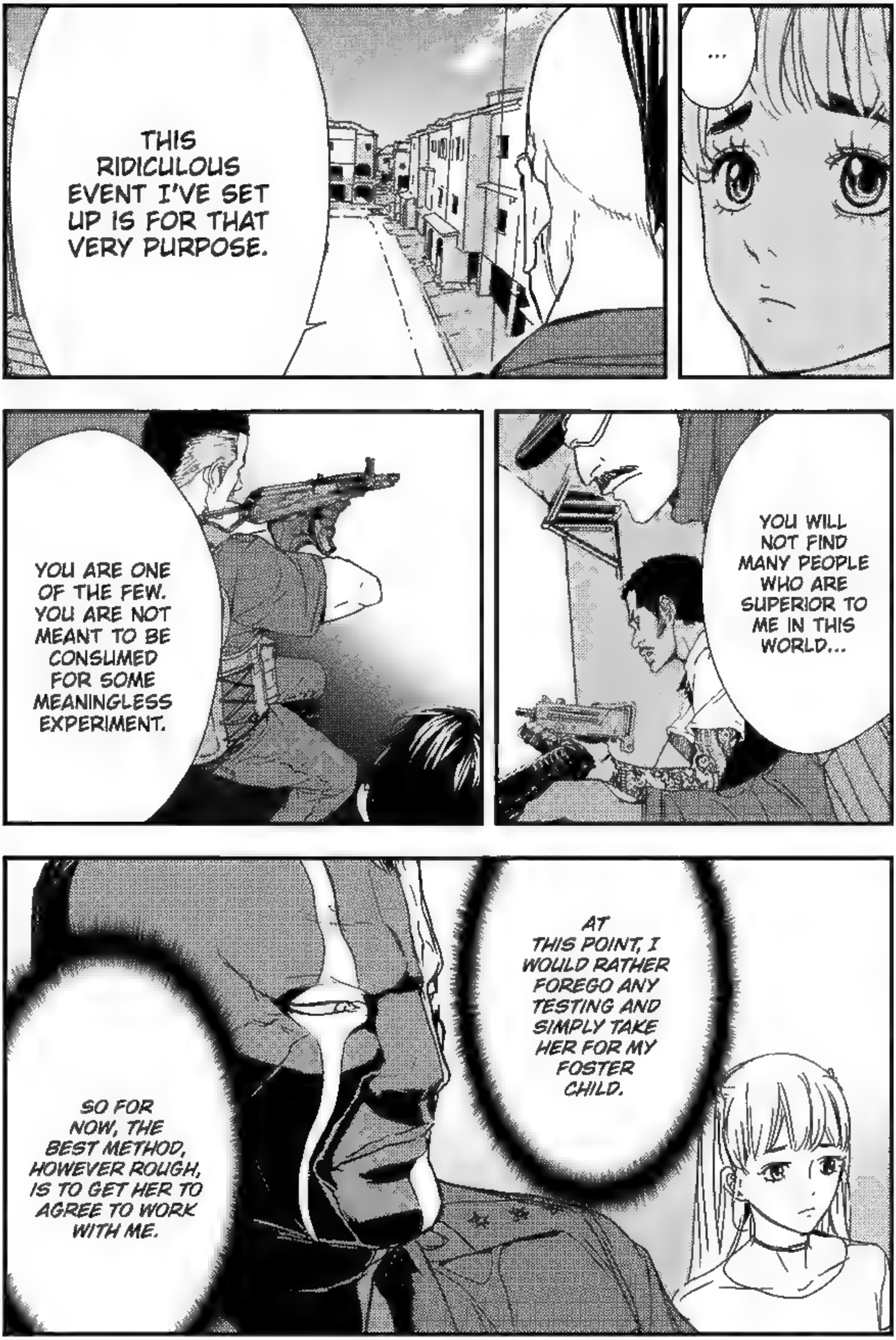

AS LONG AS YOU FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES I JUST LAID OUT.
ザッ
ZA (WHAP)
GOOD LUCK!

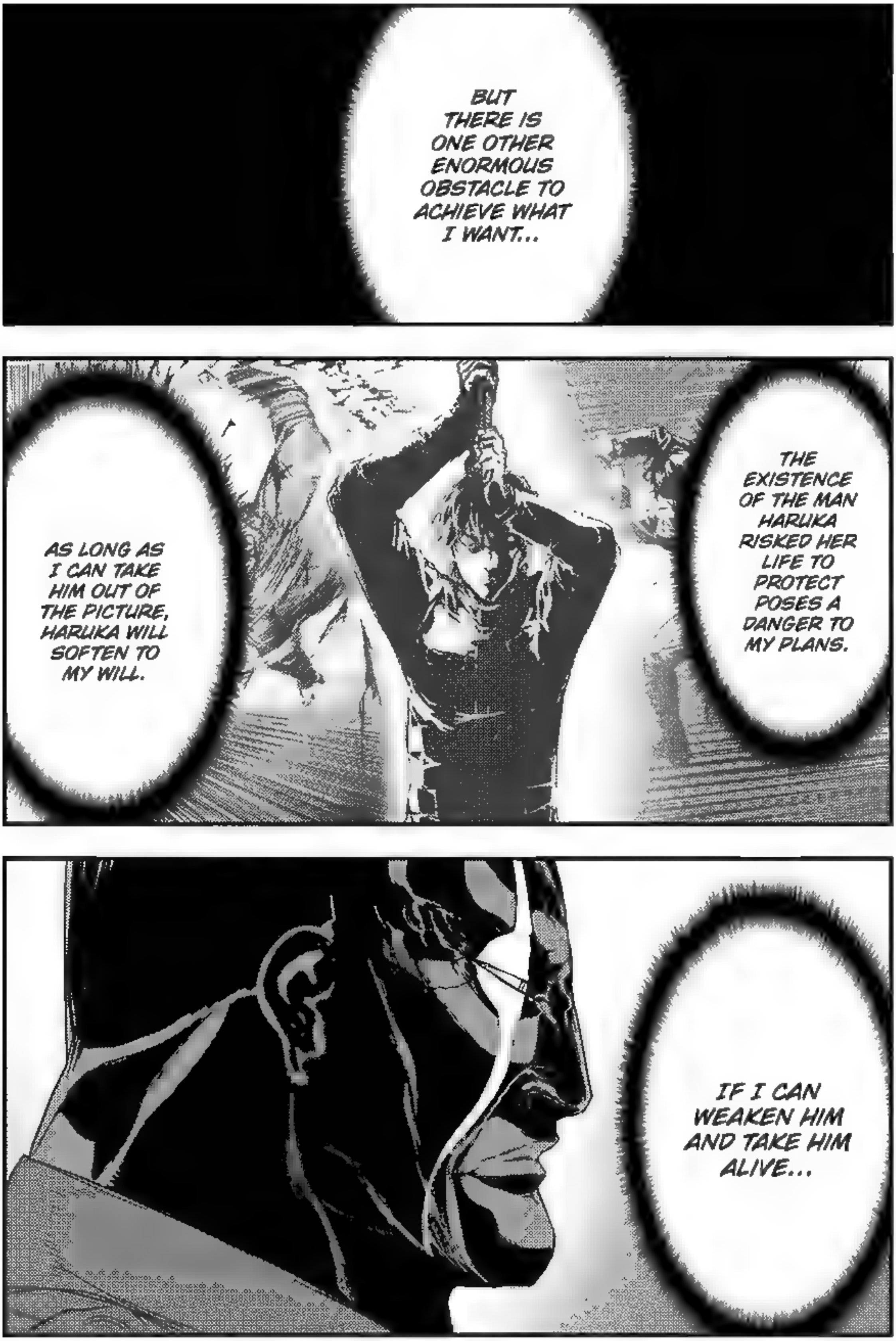

タ TA (TAT)
タ TA
タ TA
タ TA
タ TA
タ TA
タ TA
タ TA
タ TA
タ TA
タ TA
ド DON (BOOM)
バ BA (BLAT)
バ BA
ド DON
ダ DA DASH..
ダ DA
タ TA
タ TA
タ
THE ATTACK HAS BEGUN!

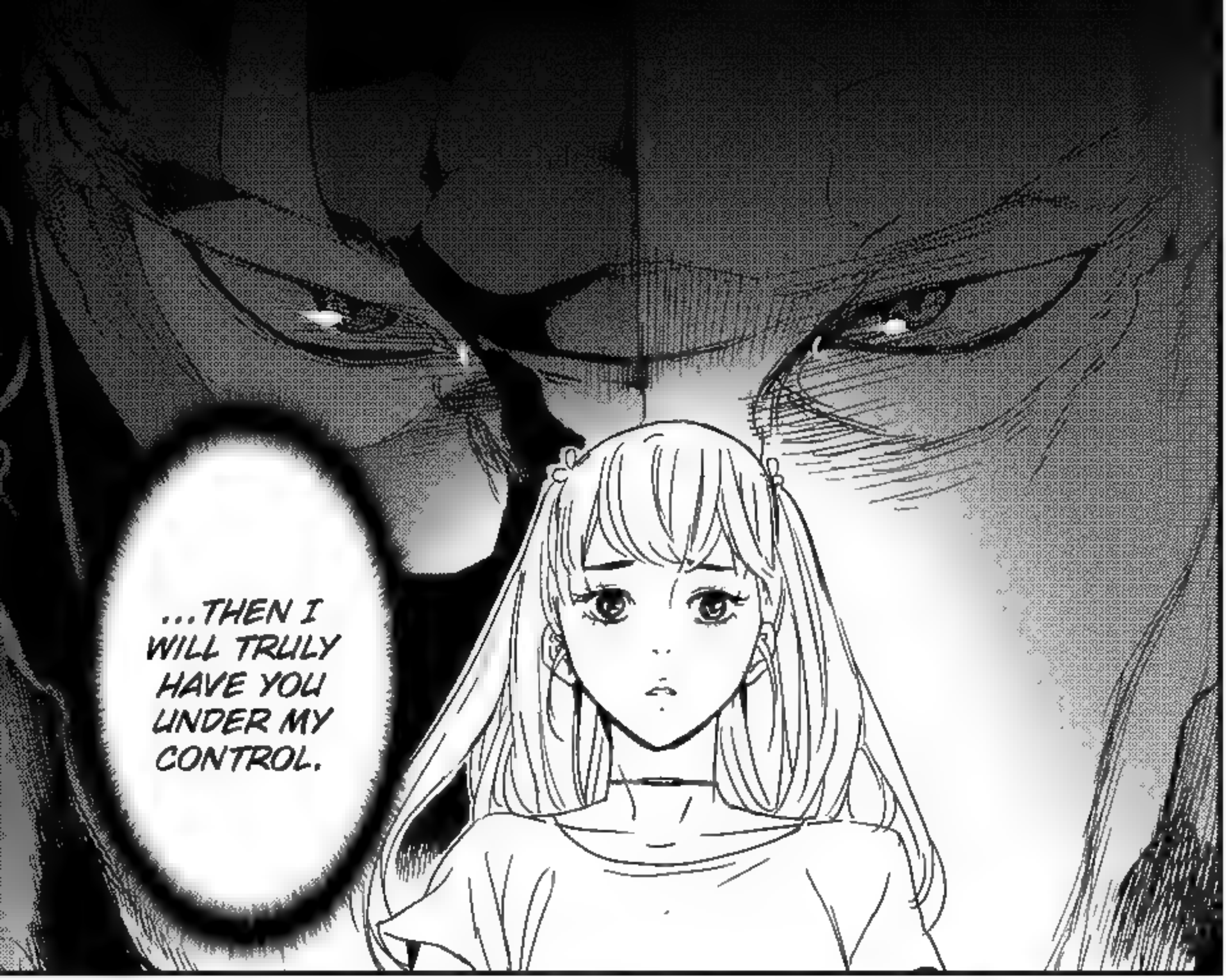

...I'VE NOTICED.
AS ORDERED, DO NOT LEAVE YOUR POSITIONS. JUST FIRE BACK AT THEM FROM WHERE YOU ARE.
YES, SIR!!
SASA (SWISH)
...

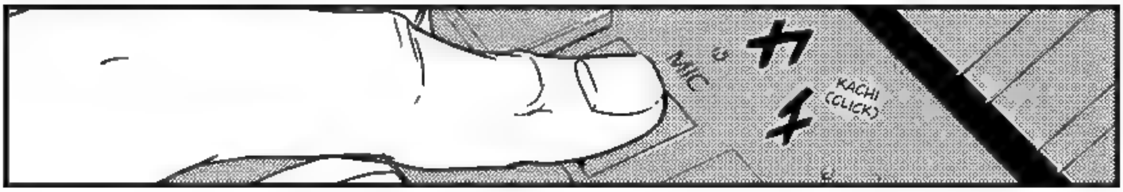

HA-HAH... WORRIED?
IT'S A FARCE.
NEITHER SIDE INTENDS TO KILL THE OTHER. IT'S A SOFT WAR, ONE IN NAME ONLY. IT IS NONSENSE.
AM I WRONG?
BUT STILL, MISTAKES WILL HAPPEN OUT OF COINCIDENCE...
EVEN A NONLETHAL PROJECTILE CAN KILL IF IT HITS THE WRONG SPOT.
WITH THOUSANDS OF THEM BEING FIRED, THERE ARE NO GUARANTEES.

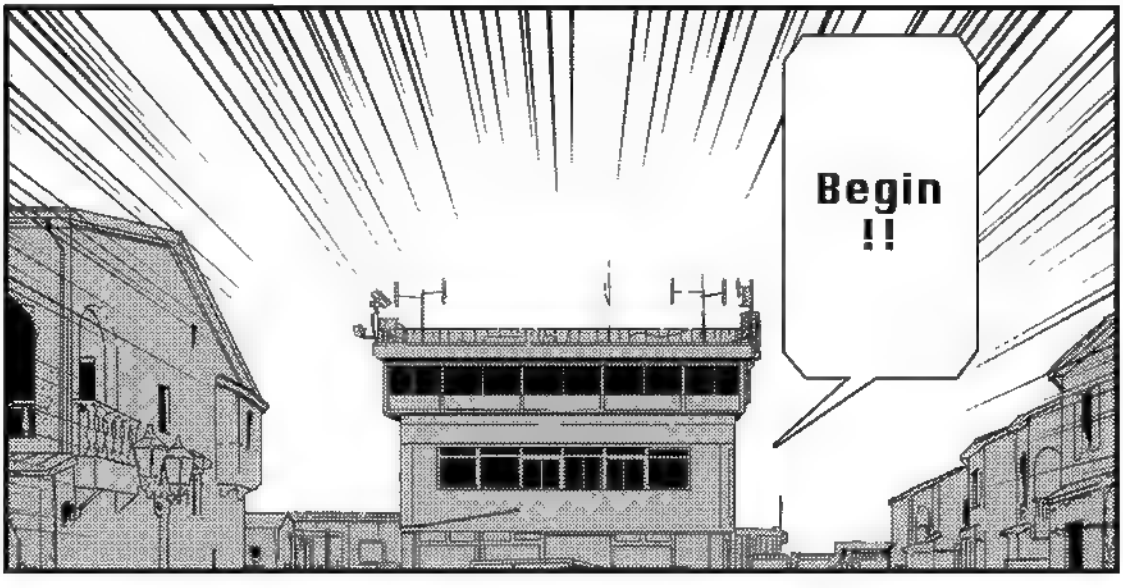

BUT EVEN THAT WILL BE HELD TO A BARE MINIMUM.
IT MEANS THAT EVERYONE HIGHLY VALUES THE FORESIGHT ABILITY OF HARUKA TOOYAMA.
AS AN ALLY, IF YOU FORESEE MURDER, YOU WILL INTERFERE.
THEREFORE, I MUST PLAN EVERYTHING UNDER THE PRECONDITION OF NOT KILLING.
BUT THE VALUE THAT YOU PROVIDE IS MORE THAN WORTH ALL OF THAT SACRIFICE.
EVEN FOR A MAN LIKE ME!


...
THIS RIDICULOUS EVENT I'VE SET UP IS FOR THAT VERY PURPOSE.
YOU WILL NOT FIND MANY PEOPLE WHO ARE SUPERIOR TO ME IN THIS WORLD...
YOU ARE ONE OF THE FEW. YOU ARE NOT MEANT TO BE CONSUMED FOR SOME MEANINGLESS EXPERIMENT.
AT THIS POINT, I WOULD RATHER FOREGO ANY TESTING AND SIMPLY TAKE HER FOR MY FOSTER CHILD.
SO FOR NOW, THE BEST METHOD, HOWEVER ROUGH, IS TO GET HER TO AGREE TO WORK WITH ME.


BUT THERE IS ONE OTHER ENORMOUS OBSTACLE TO ACHIEVE WHAT I WANT...
THE EXISTENCE OF THE MAN HARUKA RISKED HER LIFE TO PROTECT POSES A DANGER TO MY PLANS.
AS LONG AS I CAN TAKE HIM OUT OF THE PICTURE, HARUKA WILL SOFTEN TO MY WILL.
IF I CAN WEAKEN HIM AND TAKE HIM ALIVE...

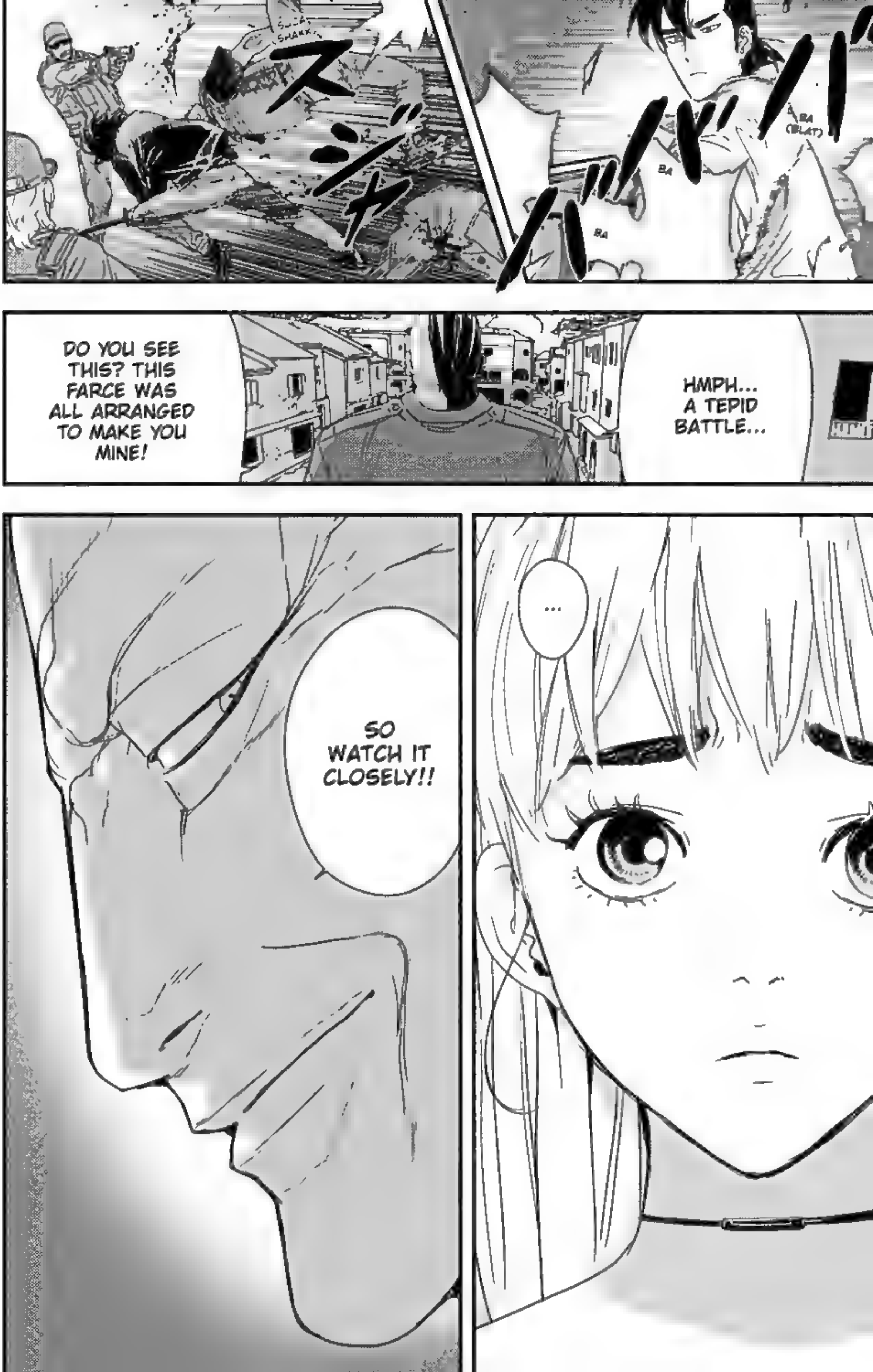

...THEN I WILL TRULY HAVE YOU UNDER MY CONTROL.


MIC
カチ
KACHI (CLICK)

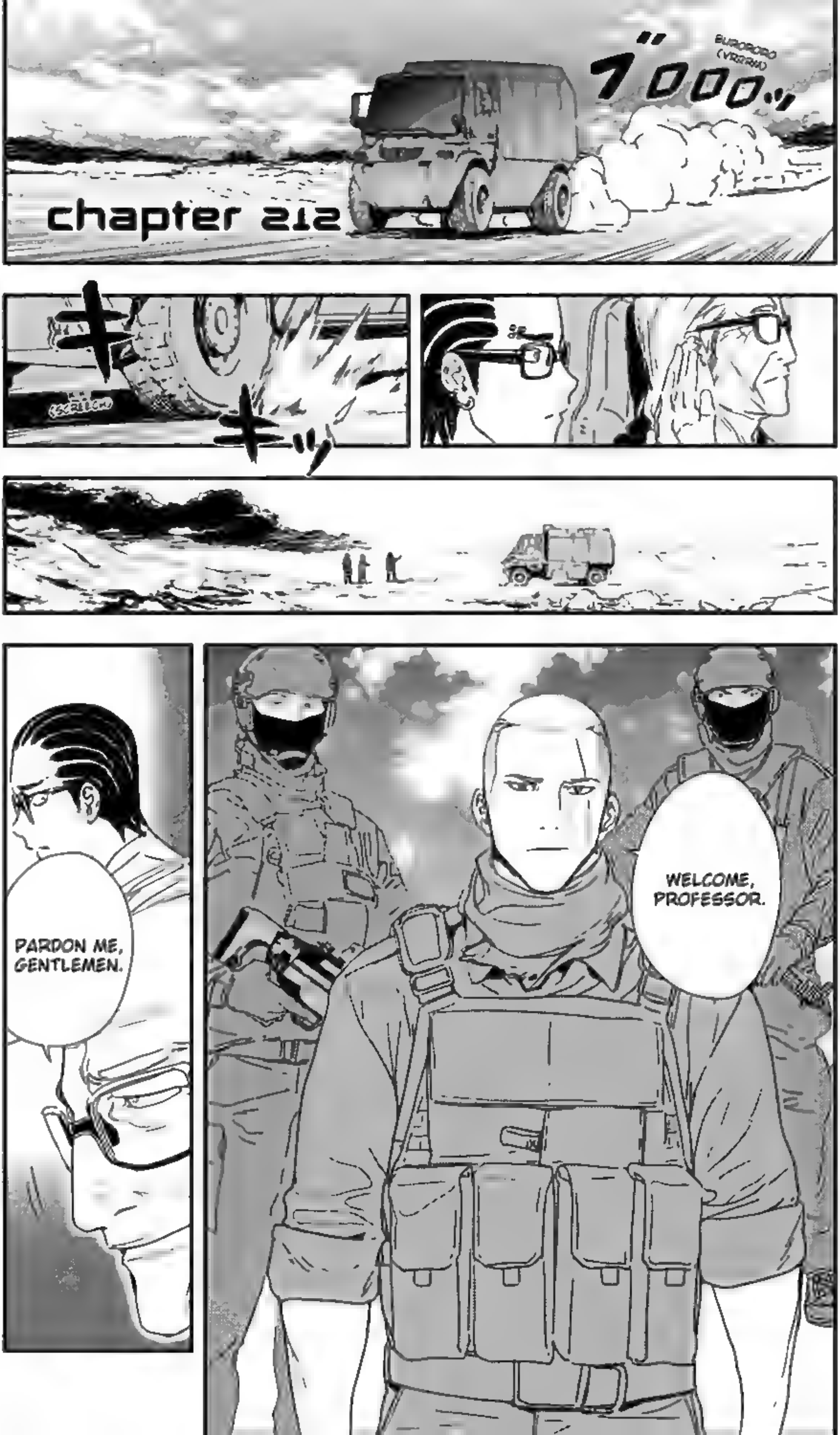

Begin !!

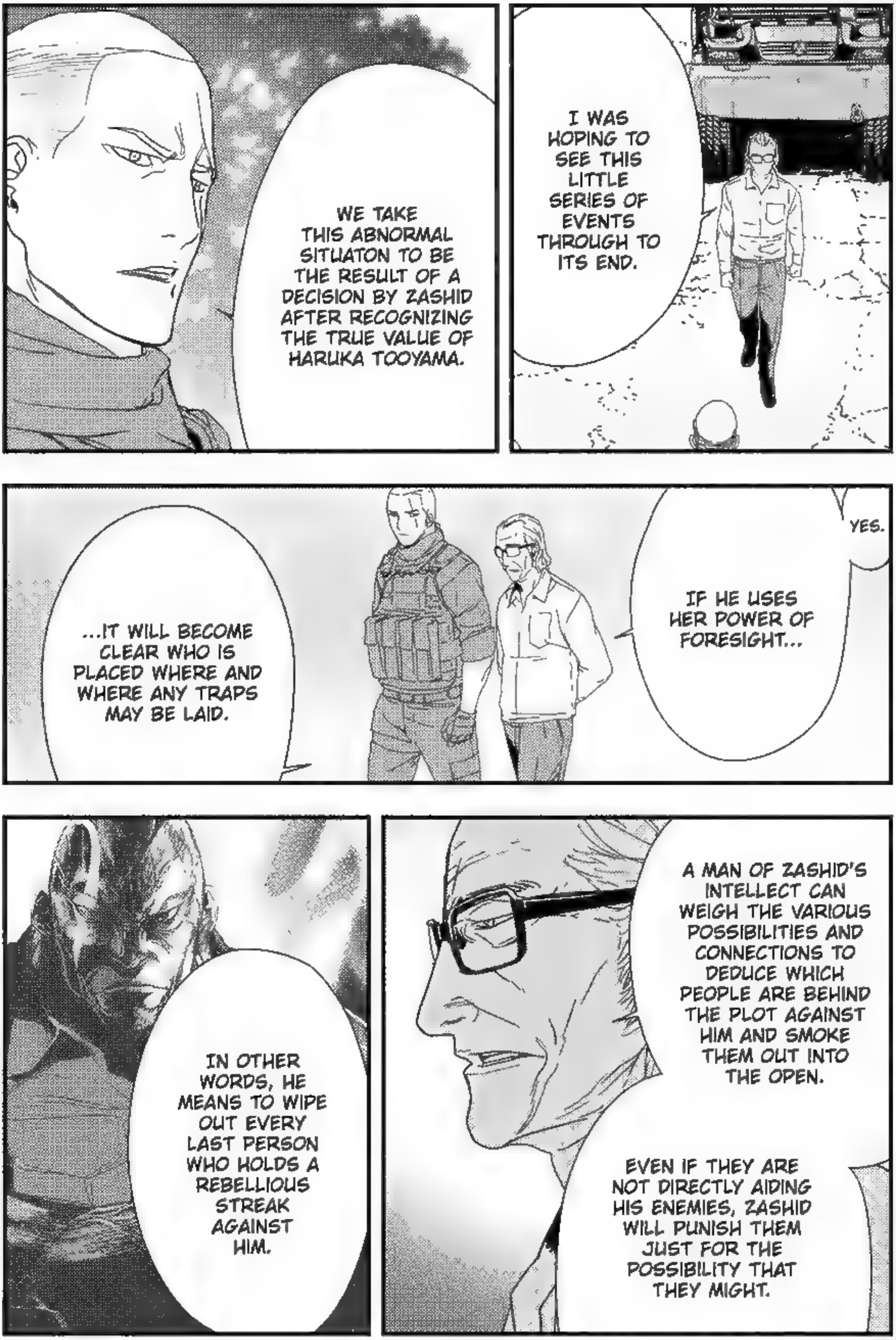
Until Death do us Part

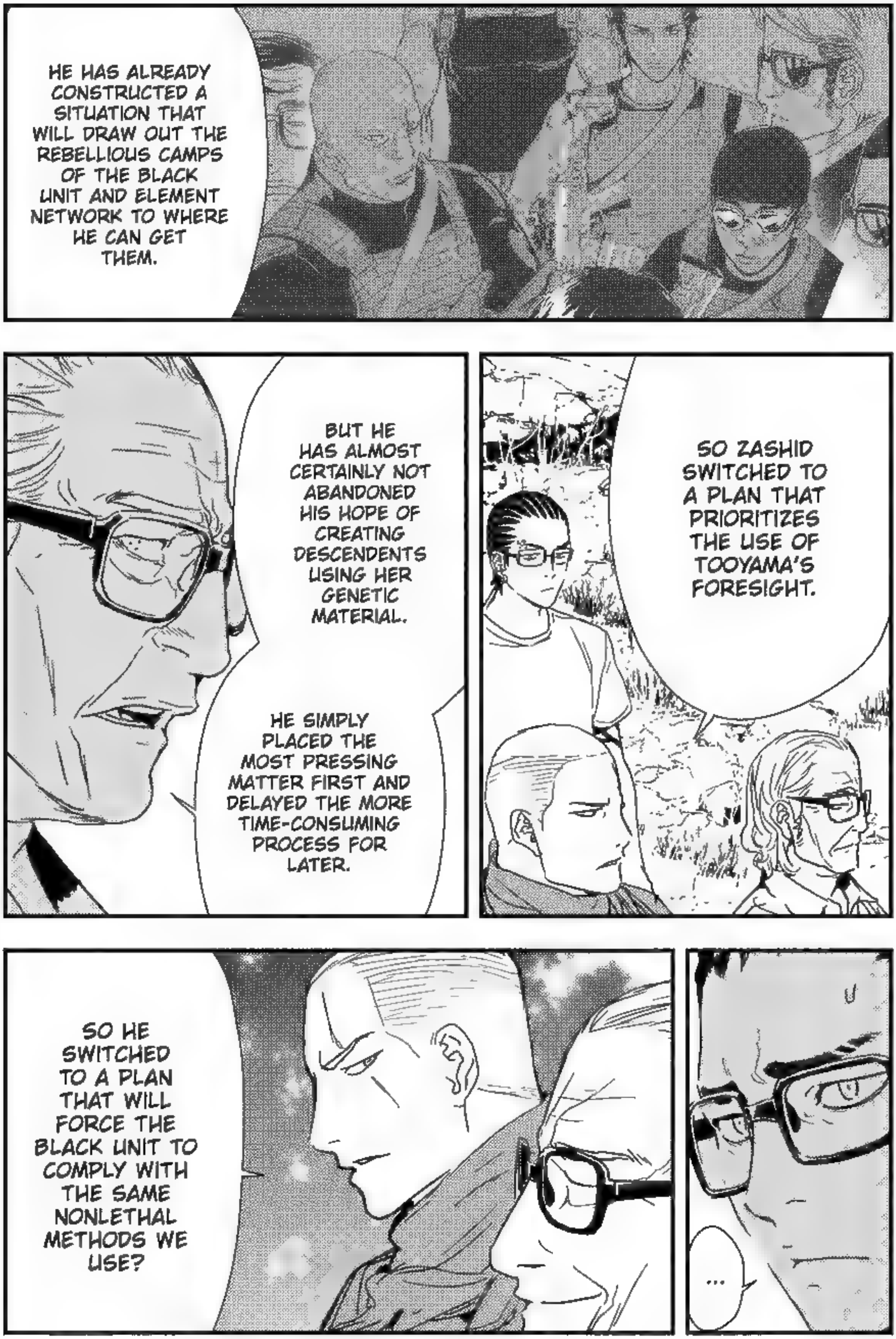
ZA
(ZSHO)
ザッ
ZA
ザッ
ZA
ザッ
TA
(TEK)
タ
TA
タッ
SASA
(SWISH)
サッ
サッ
ZASHU
SHK
BA
BLAM
GA
(WHAK)

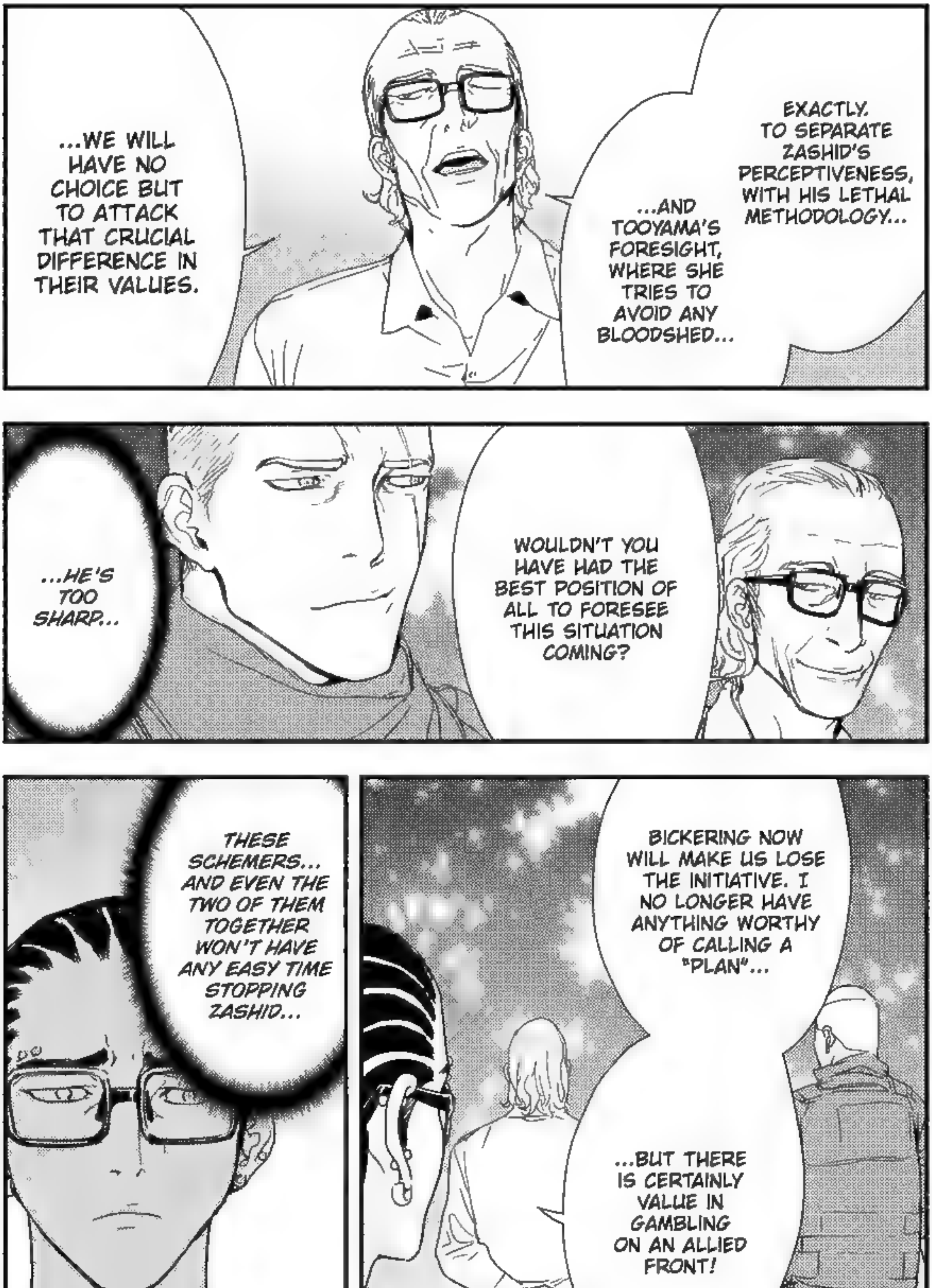

バババ
BA
BA
BA (BLAT)
スジャ
SHA SHAKK
HMPH... A TEPID BATTLE...
DO YOU SEE THIS? THIS FARCE WAS ALL ARRANGED TO MAKE YOU MINE!
...
SO WATCH IT CLOSELY!!

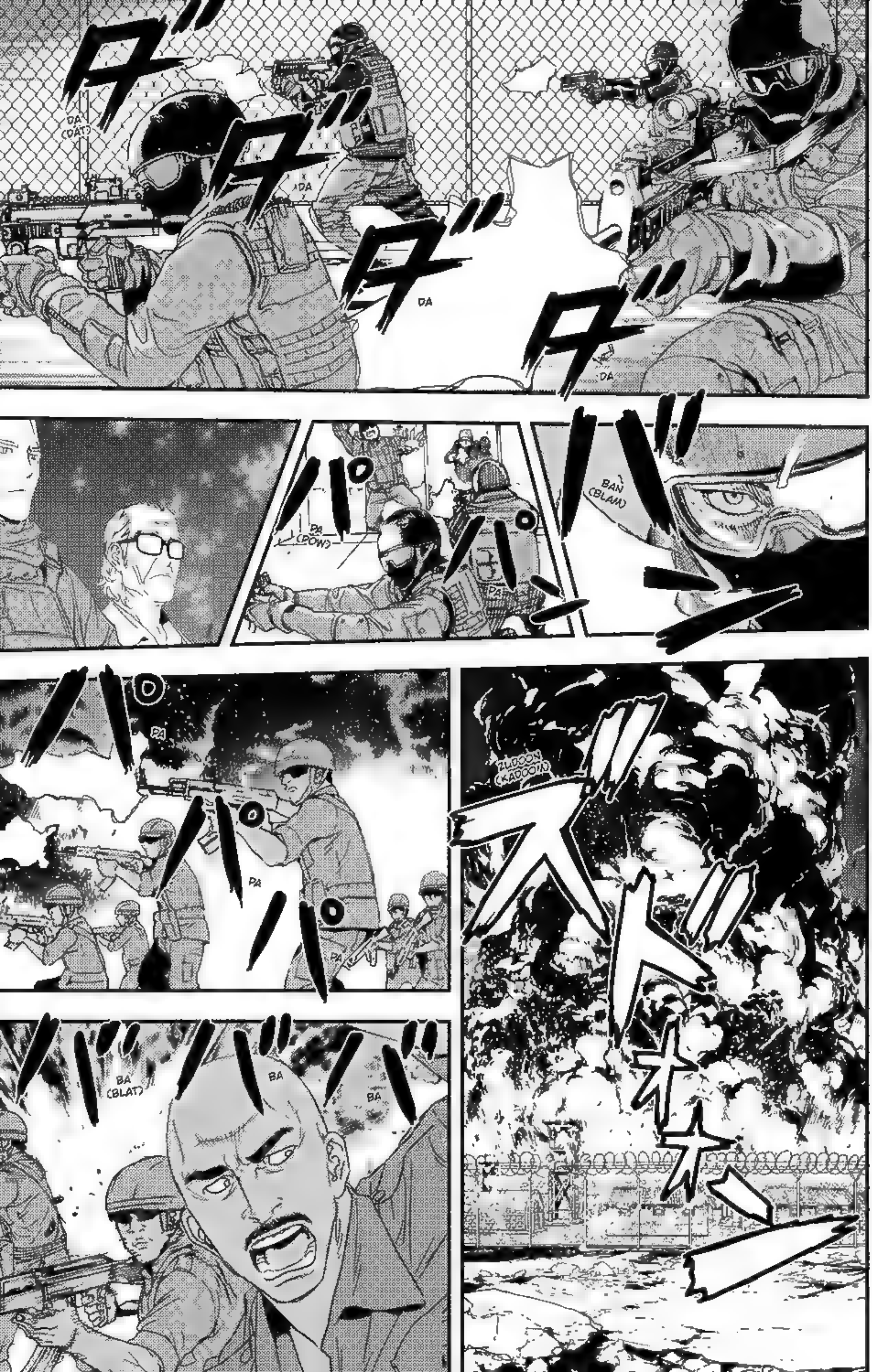
chapter 212

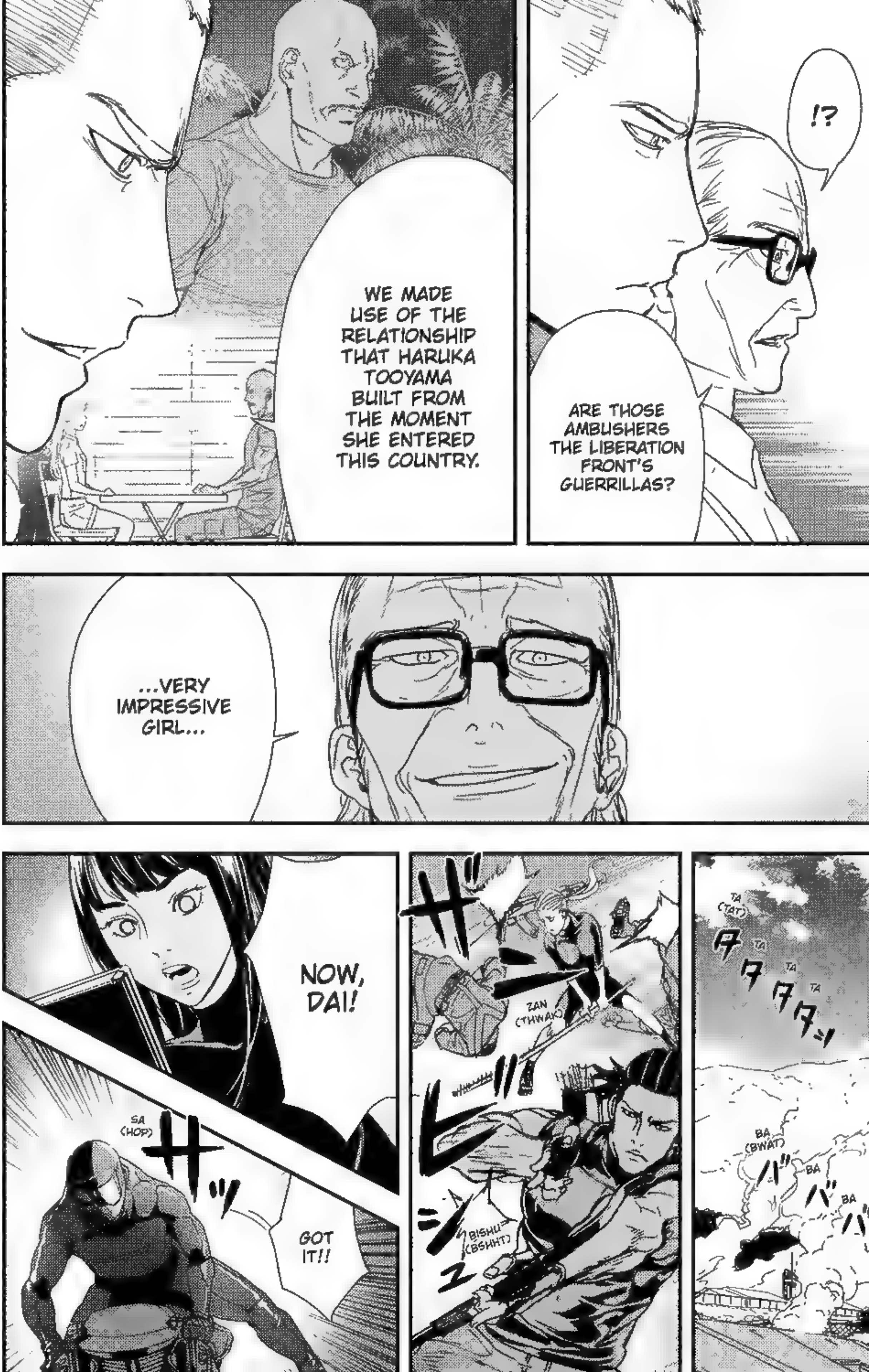

ブロロロッ
BURORORO (VRRRM)
キキッ
(SCREECH)
WELCOME, PROFESSOR.
PARDON ME, GENTLEMEN.

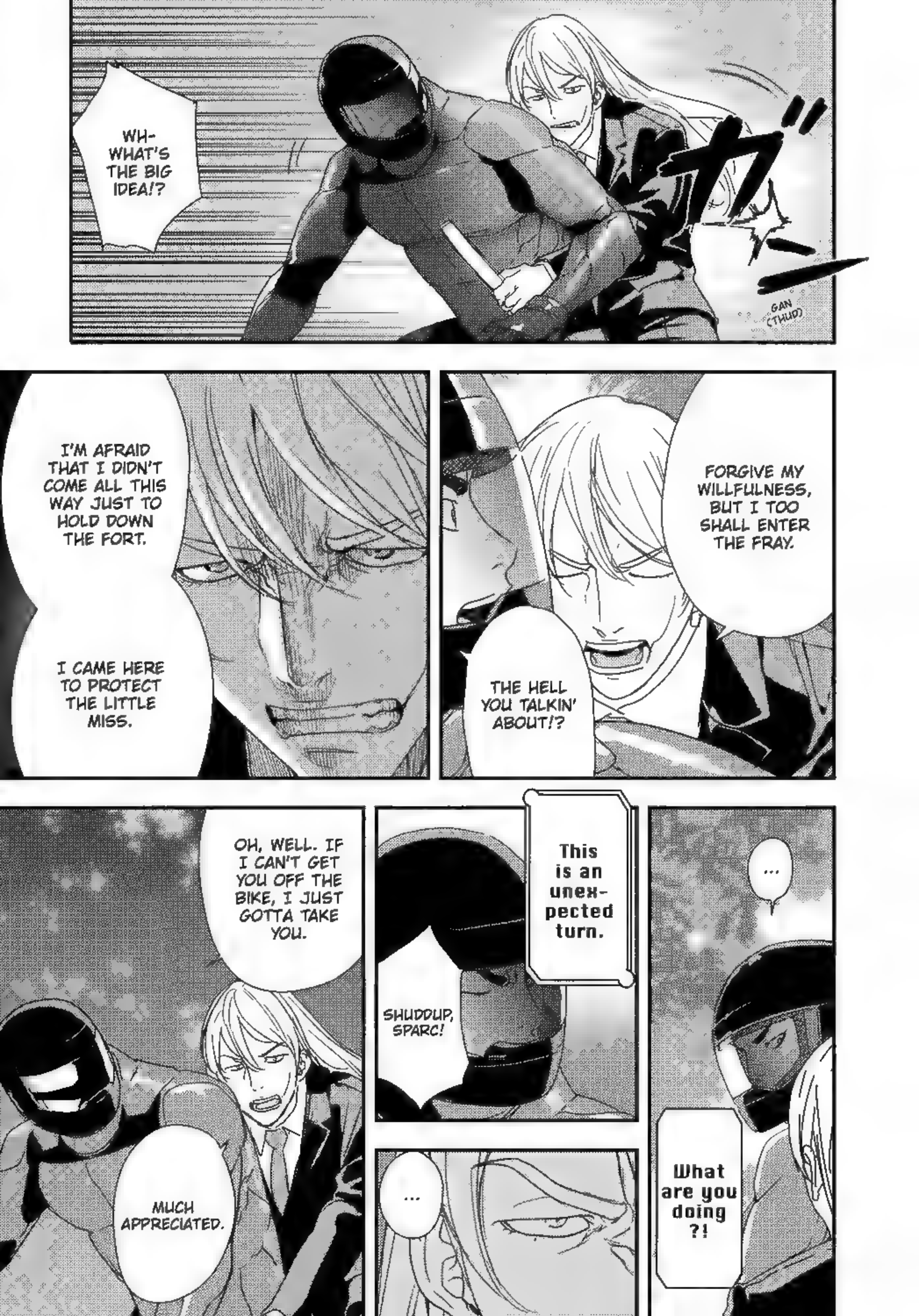

I WAS HOPING TO SEE THIS LITTLE SERIES OF EVENTS THROUGH TO ITS END.
WE TAKE THIS ABNORMAL SITUATON TO BE THE RESULT OF A DECISION BY ZASHID AFTER RECOGNIZING THE TRUE VALUE OF HARUKA TOOYAMA.
YES.
IF HE USES HER POWER OF FORESIGHT...
...IT WILL BECOME CLEAR WHO IS PLACED WHERE AND WHERE ANY TRAPS MAY BE LAID.
A MAN OF ZASHID'S INTELLECT CAN WEIGH THE VARIOUS POSSIBILITIES AND CONNECTIONS TO DEDUCE WHICH PEOPLE ARE BEHIND THE PLOT AGAINST HIM AND SMOKE THEM OUT INTO THE OPEN.
EVEN IF THEY ARE NOT DIRECTLY AIDING HIS ENEMIES, ZASHID WILL PUNISH THEM JUST FOR THE POSSIBILITY THAT THEY MIGHT.
IN OTHER WORDS, HE MEANS TO WIPE OUT EVERY LAST PERSON WHO HOLDS A REBELLIOUS STREAK AGAINST HIM.

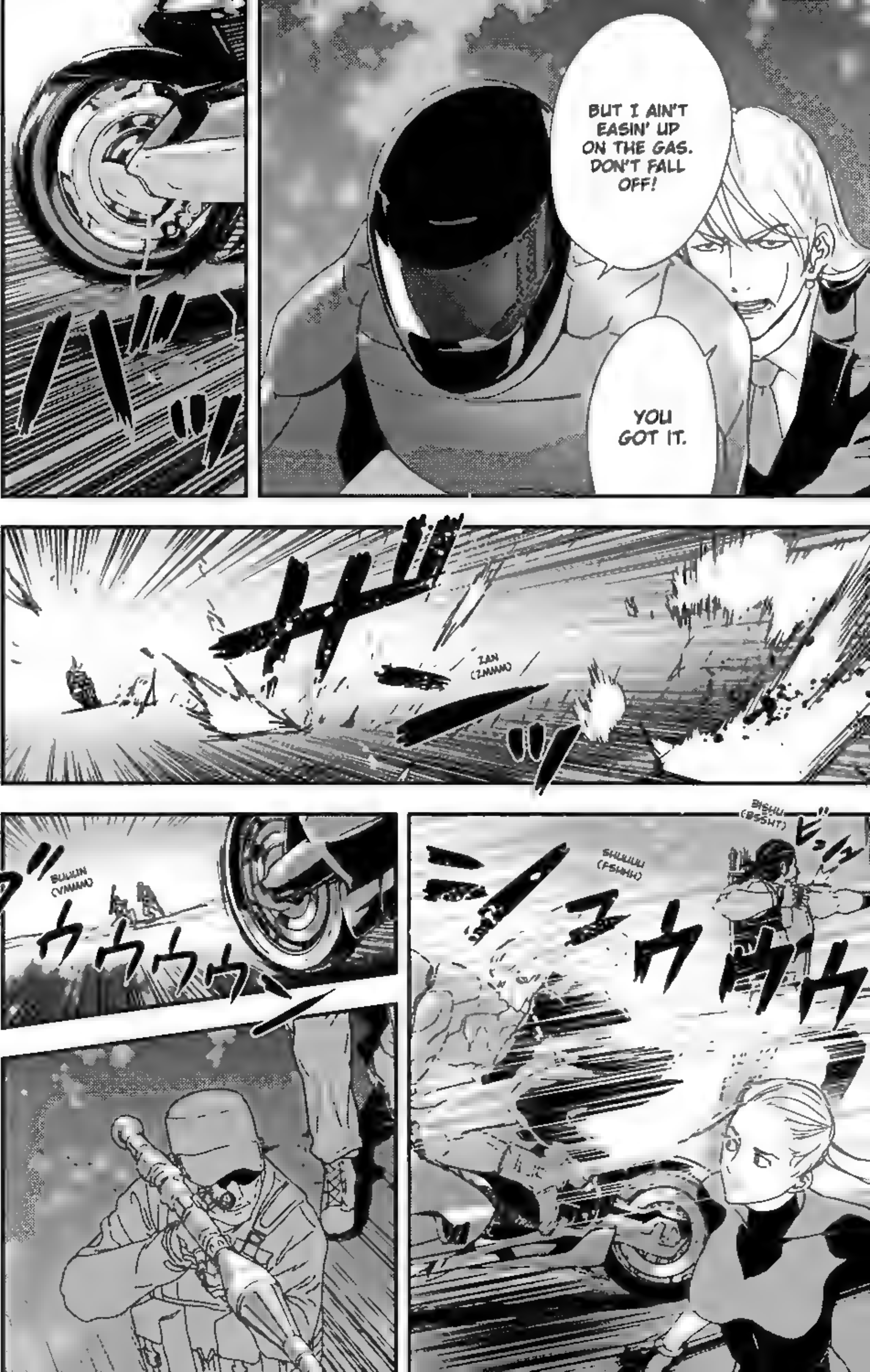

HE HAS ALREADY CONSTRUCTED A SITUATION THAT WILL DRAW OUT THE REBELLIOUS CAMPS OF THE BLACK UNIT AND ELEMENT NETWORK TO WHERE HE CAN GET THEM.
SO ZASHID SWITCHED TO A PLAN THAT PRIORITIZES THE USE OF TOOYAMA'S FORESIGHT.
BUT HE HAS ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT ABANDONED HIS HOPE OF CREATING DESCENDENTS USING HER GENETIC MATERIAL.
HE SIMPLY PLACED THE MOST PRESSING MATTER FIRST AND DELAYED THE MORE TIME-CONSUMING PROCESS FOR LATER.
...
SO HE SWITCHED TO A PLAN THAT WILL FORCE THE BLACK UNIT TO COMPLY WITH THE SAME NONLETHAL METHODS WE USE?

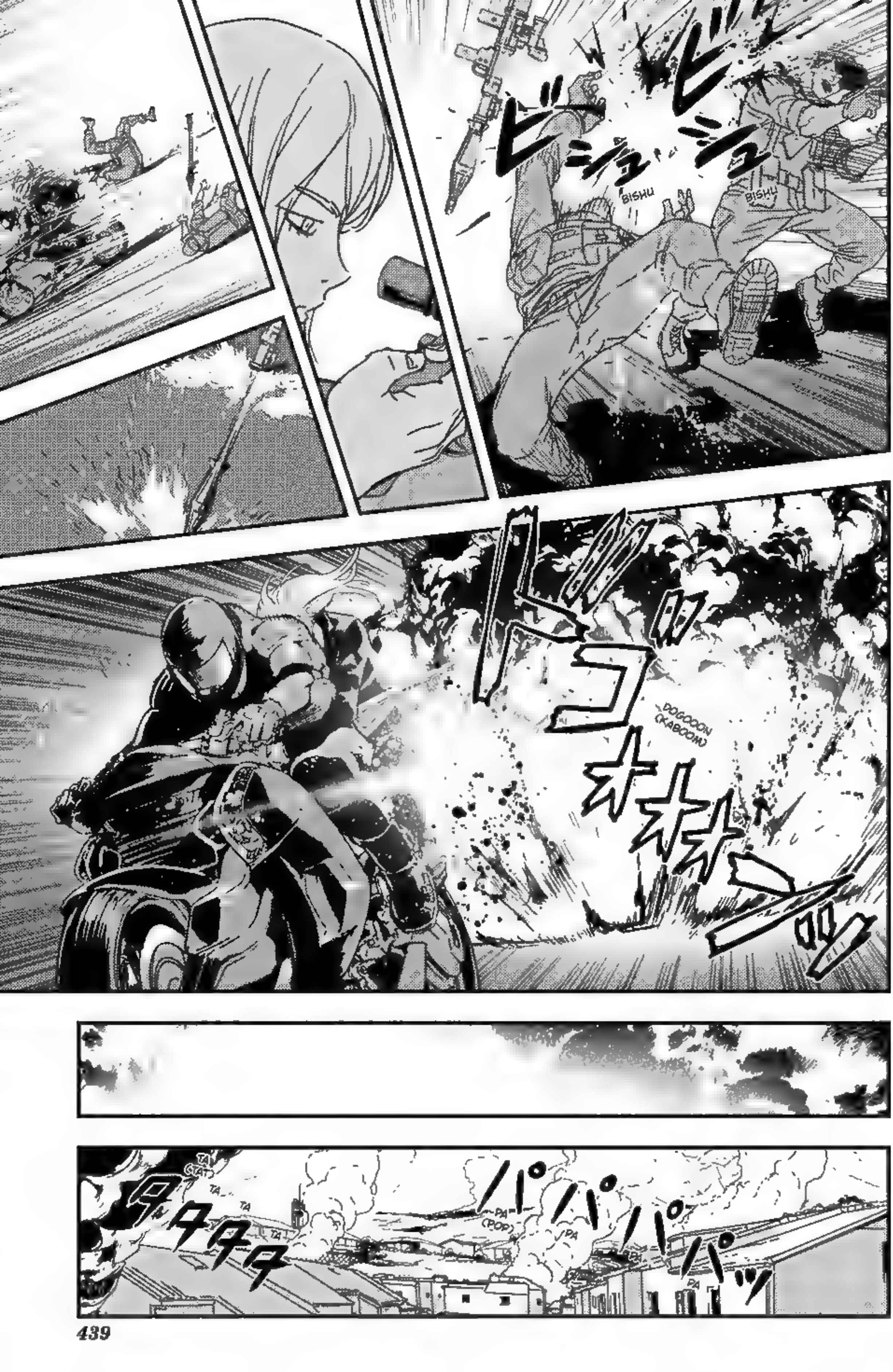

EXACTLY. TO SEPARATE ZASHID'S PERCEPTIVENESS, WITH HIS LETHAL METHODOLOGY...
...AND TOOYAMA'S FORESIGHT, WHERE SHE TRIES TO AVOID ANY BLOODSHED...
...WE WILL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO ATTACK THAT CRUCIAL DIFFERENCE IN THEIR VALUES.
WOULDN'T YOU HAVE HAD THE BEST POSITION OF ALL TO FORESEE THIS SITUATION COMING?
...HE'S TOO SHARP...
BICKERING NOW WILL MAKE US LOSE THE INITIATIVE. I NO LONGER HAVE ANYTHING WORTHY OF CALLING A "PLAN"...
...BUT THERE IS CERTAINLY VALUE IN GAMBLING ON AN ALLIED FRONT!
THESE SCHEMERS... AND EVEN THE TWO OF THEM TOGETHER WON'T HAVE ANY EASY TIME STOPPING ZASHID...

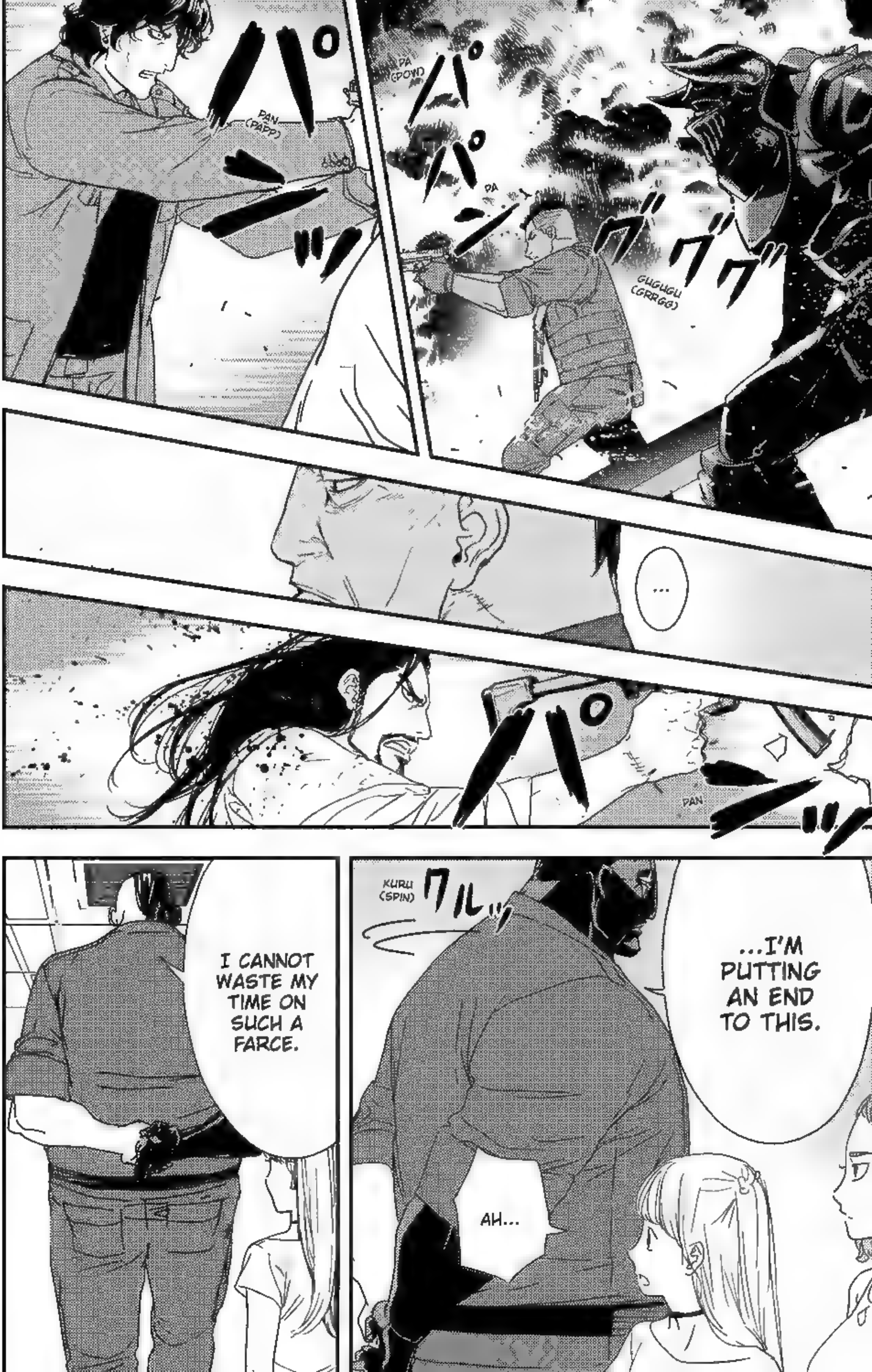

DA
DA
DA
DA (DAT)
BAN (BLAM)
PA (POW)
PA
ZUDOON (KADOOM)
PA
PA
PA
BA (BLAT)
BA
BA

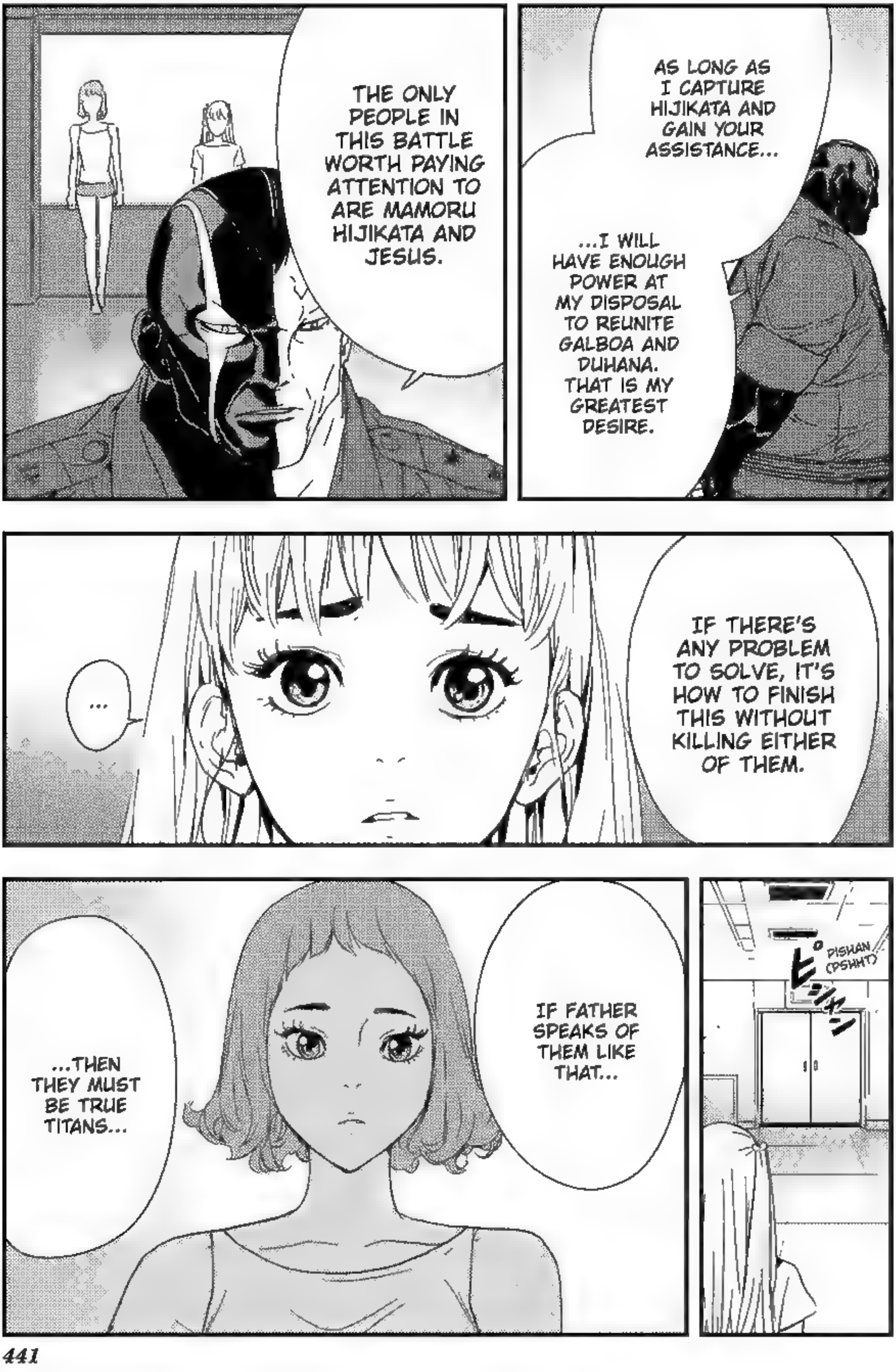

!?
ARE THOSE AMBUSHERS THE LIBERATION FRONT'S GUERRILLAS?
WE MADE USE OF THE RELATIONSHIP THAT HARUKA TOOYAMA BUILT FROM THE MOMENT SHE ENTERED THIS COUNTRY.
...VERY IMPRESSIVE GIRL...
TA (TAT)
TA
TA
TA
BA (BWAT)
BA
BA
ZAN (THWAK)
BISHU (BSHHT)
NOW, DAI!
SA (HOP)
GOT IT!!

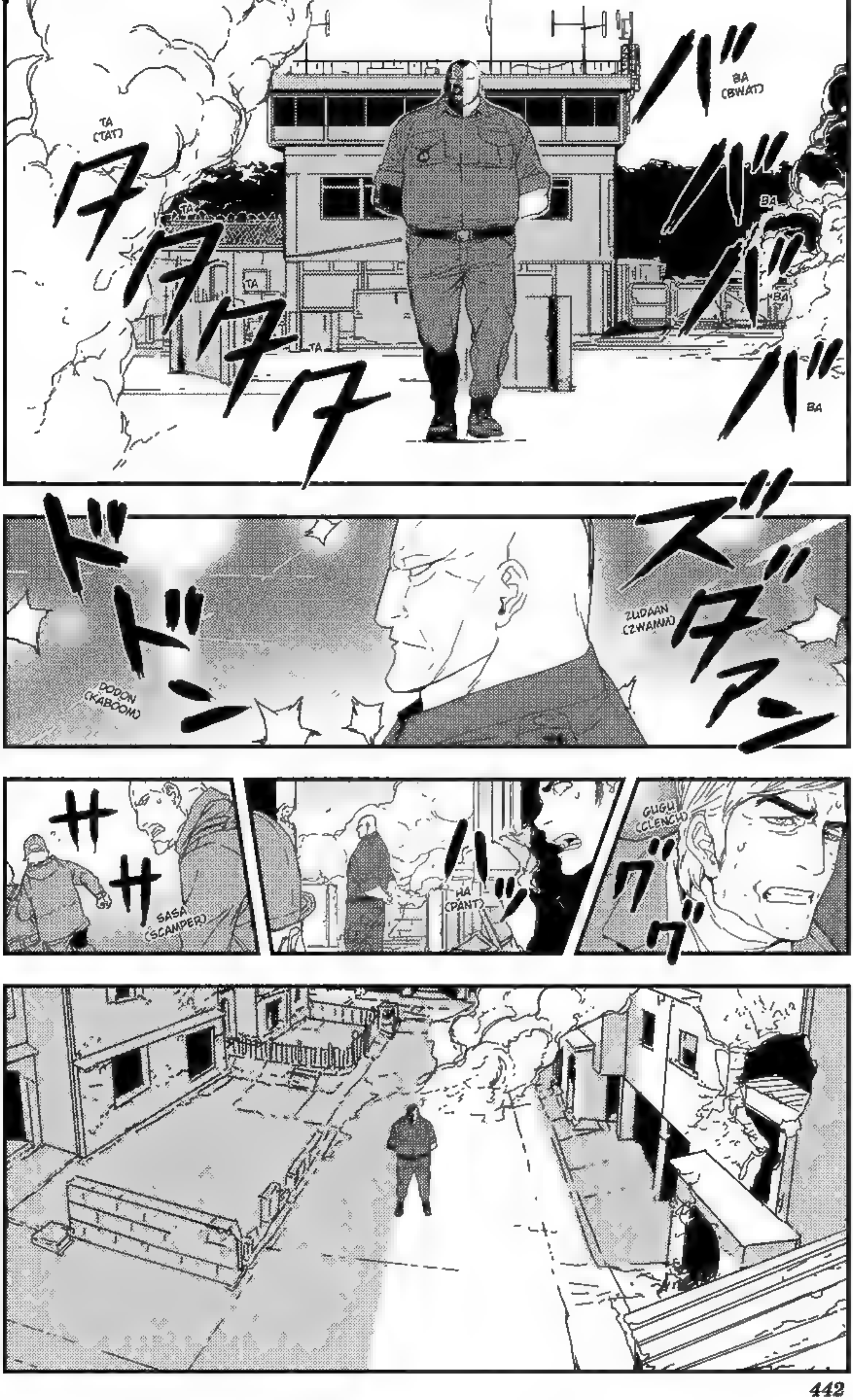

WH- WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA!?
GAN (THUD)
FORGIVE MY WILLFULNESS, BUT I TOO SHALL ENTER THE FRAY.
THE HELL YOU TALKIN' ABOUT!?
I'M AFRAID THAT I DIDN'T COME ALL THIS WAY JUST TO HOLD DOWN THE FORT.
I CAME HERE TO PROTECT THE LITTLE MISS.
...
What are you doing?!
This is an unexpected turn.
SHUDDUP, SPARC!
...
OH, WELL. IF I CAN'T GET YOU OFF THE BIKE, I JUST GOTTA TAKE YOU.
MUCH APPRECIATED.

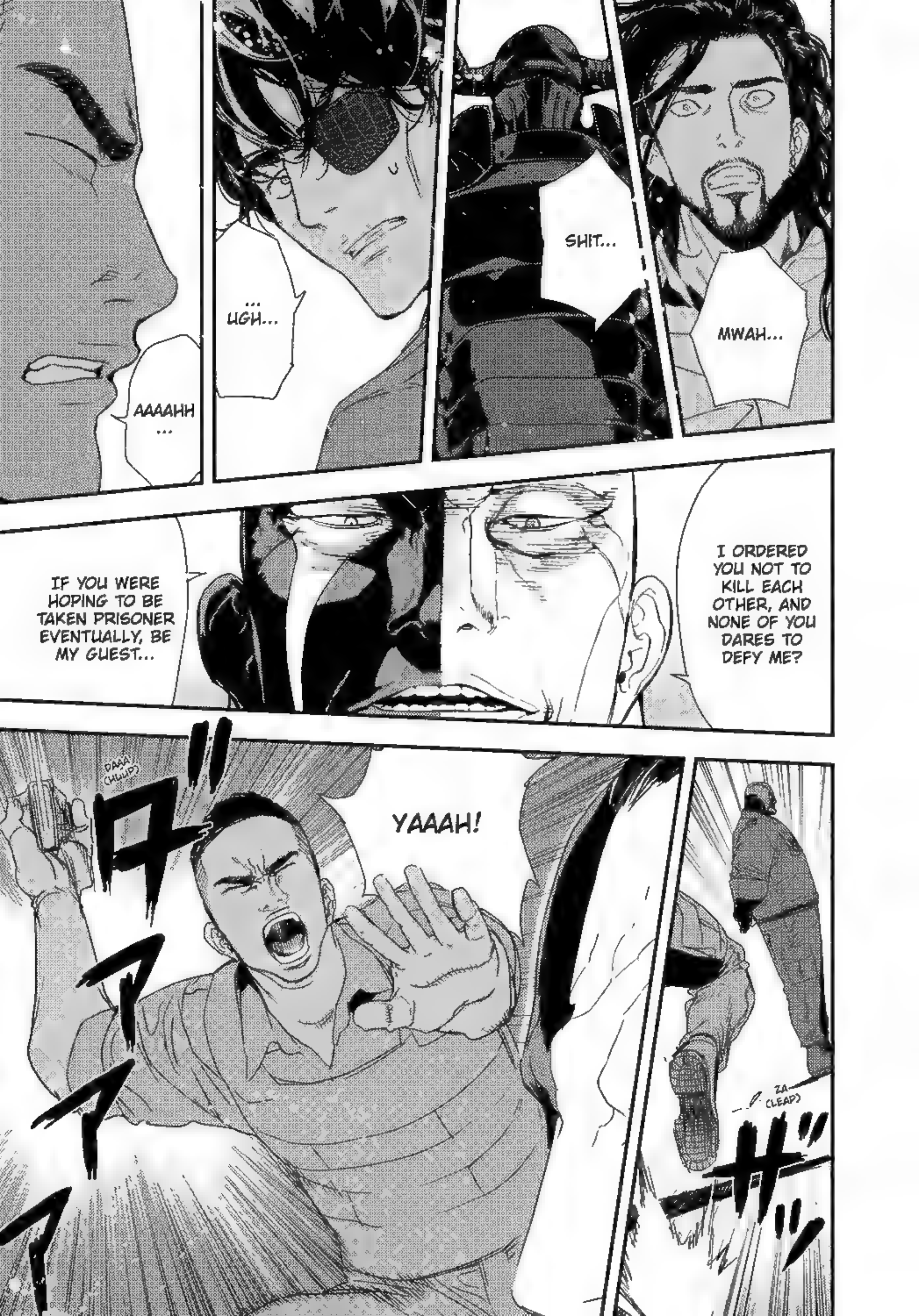

BUT I AIN'T EASIN' UP ON THE GAS. DON'T FALL OFF!
YOU GOT IT.
バッ
ザンッ
ZAN (ZMMM)
ビシュッ
BISHU (BSSHT)
シュウウウ
SHUUUU (FSHHH)
ブウウウウ
BUUUN (VMMM)

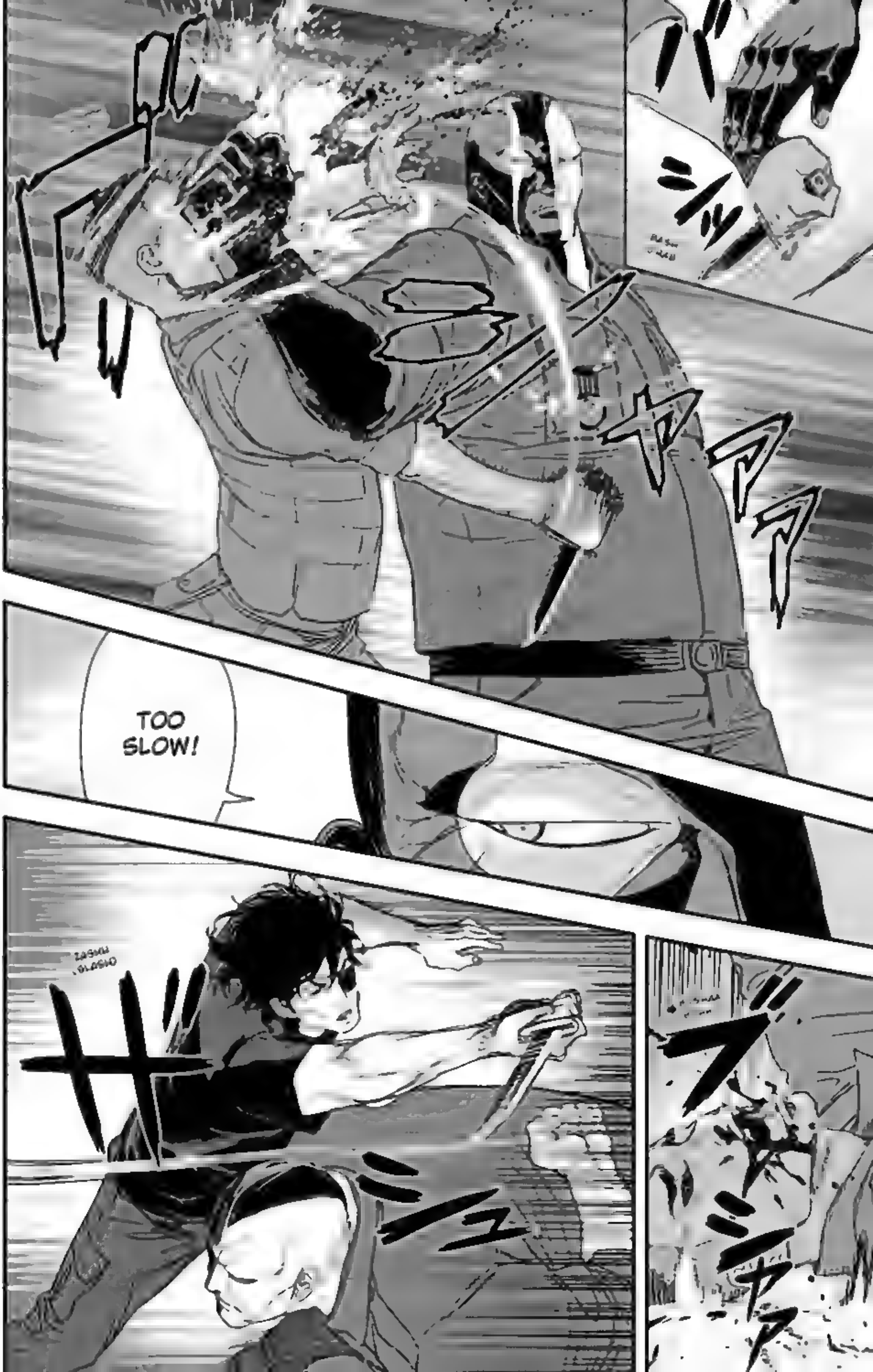

ビシュ
ビシュ
BISHU
BISHU
ドゴオオオンッ
DOGOOON (KABOOM)
パパパパッ
PA (POP)
PA
PA
タタタタ
TA (TAT)
TA
TA
TA

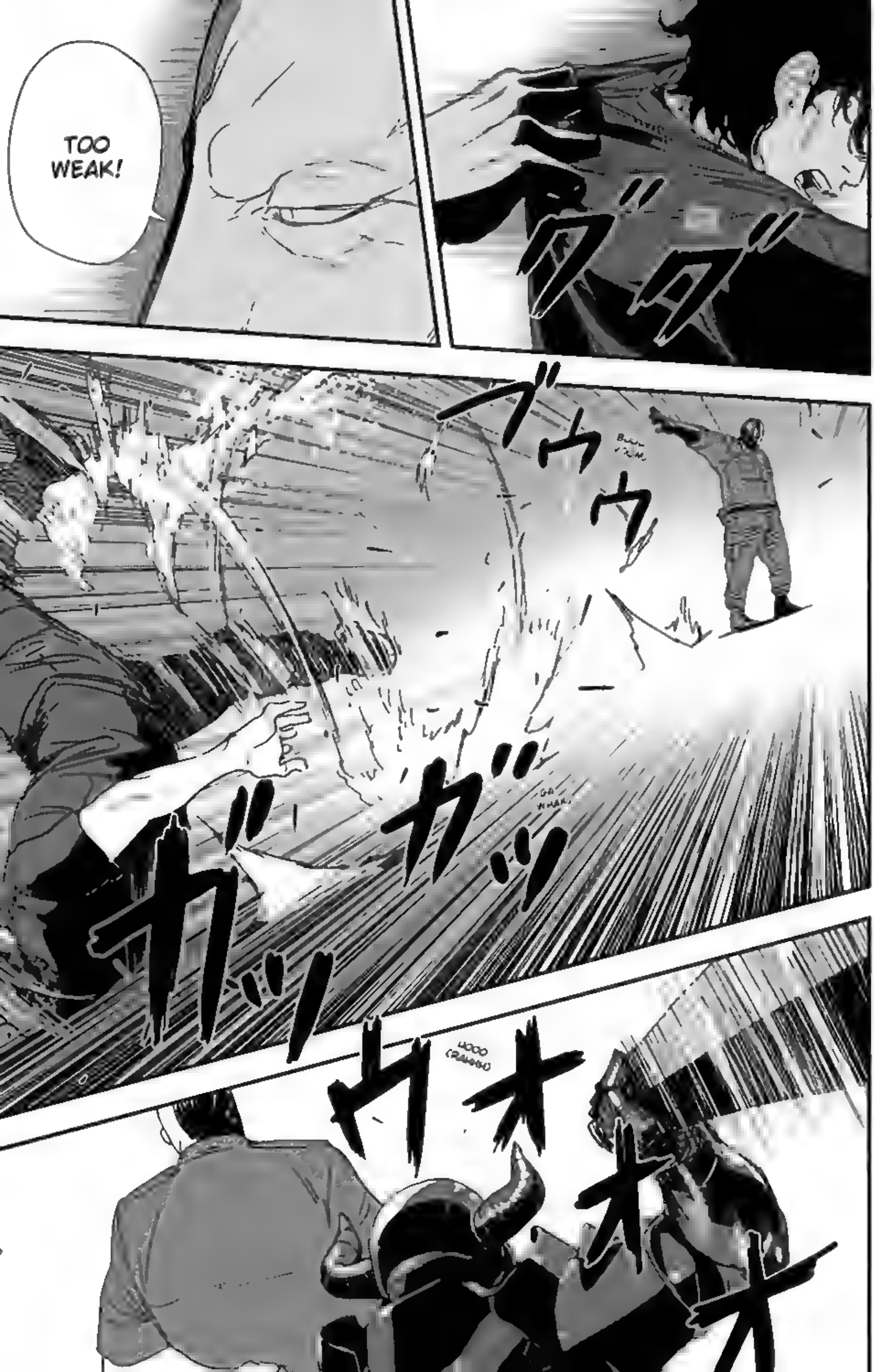

PA (POW)
パ
パ
PA
ググッ
GUGUGU (GRRGG)
パ
PAN (PAPP)
...
パ
PAN
KURU (SPIN)
クルッ
...I'M PUTTING AN END TO THIS.
AH...
I CANNOT WASTE MY TIME ON SUCH A FARCE.

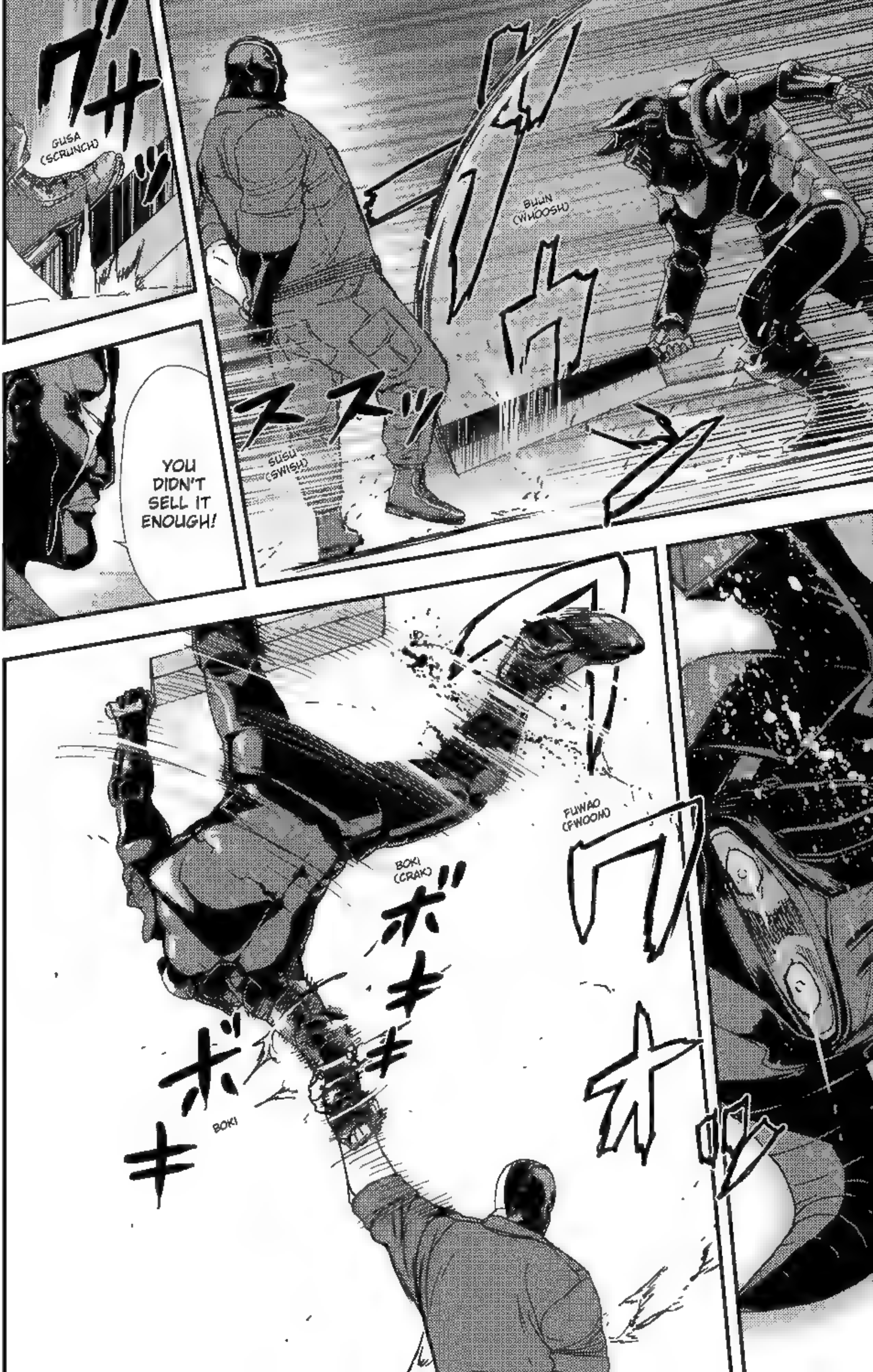

AS LONG AS I CAPTURE HIJIKATA AND GAIN YOUR ASSISTANCE...
...I WILL HAVE ENOUGH POWER AT MY DISPOSAL TO REUNITE GALBOA AND DUHANA. THAT IS MY GREATEST DESIRE.
THE ONLY PEOPLE IN THIS BATTLE WORTH PAYING ATTENTION TO ARE MAMORU HIJIKATA AND JESUS.
IF THERE'S ANY PROBLEM TO SOLVE, IT'S HOW TO FINISH THIS WITHOUT KILLING EITHER OF THEM.
...
PISHAN (PSHHT)
IF FATHER SPEAKS OF THEM LIKE THAT...
...THEN THEY MUST BE TRUE TITANS...

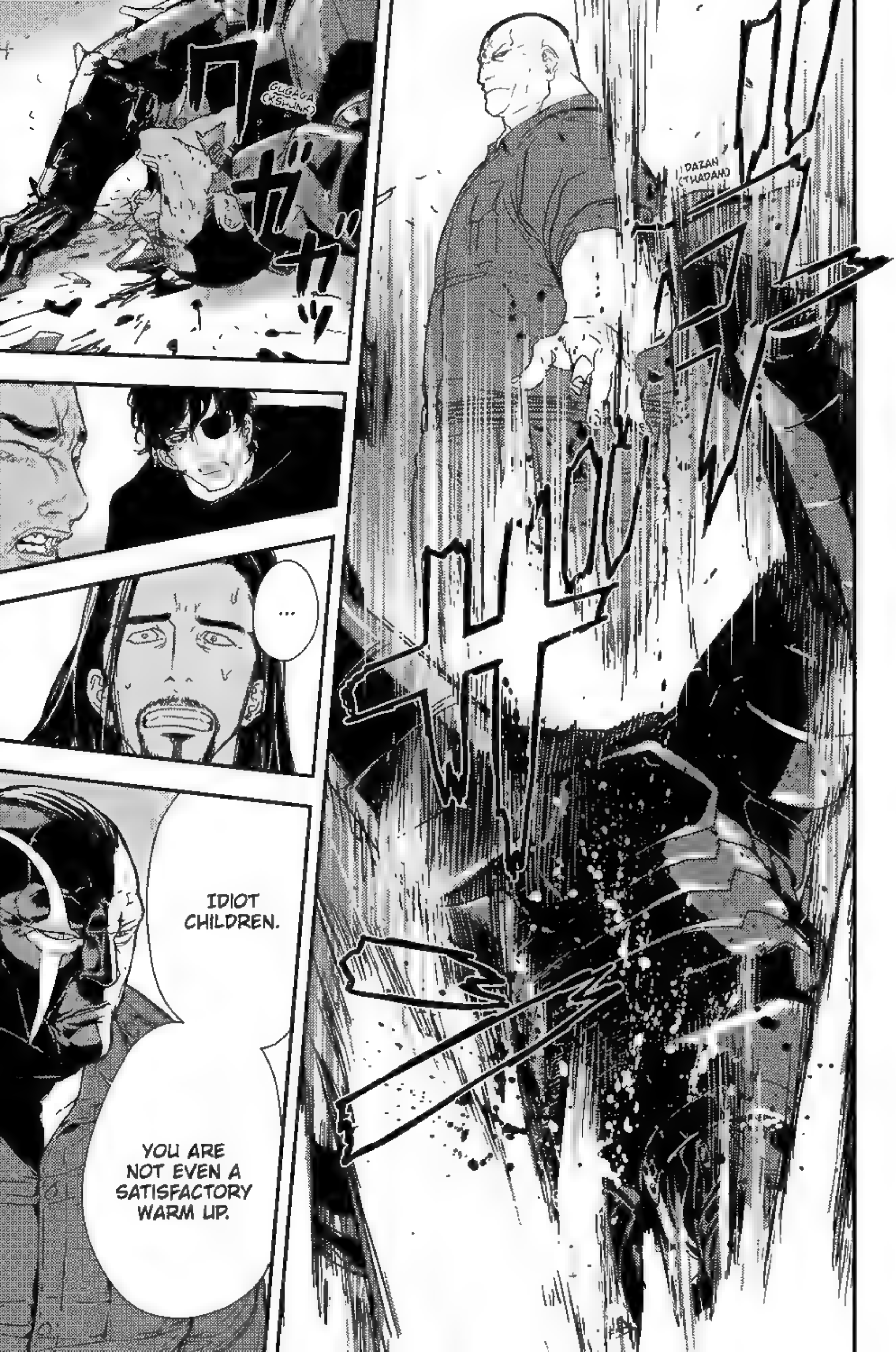

バババババ
BA (BWAT)
BA
BA
BA
タタタタタ
TA (TAT)
TA
TA
TA
ズダァン
ZUDAAN (ZWAMM)
ドドン
DODON (KABOOM)
ググ
GUGU (CLENCH)
ハッ
HA (PANT)
ササ
SASA (SCAMPER)

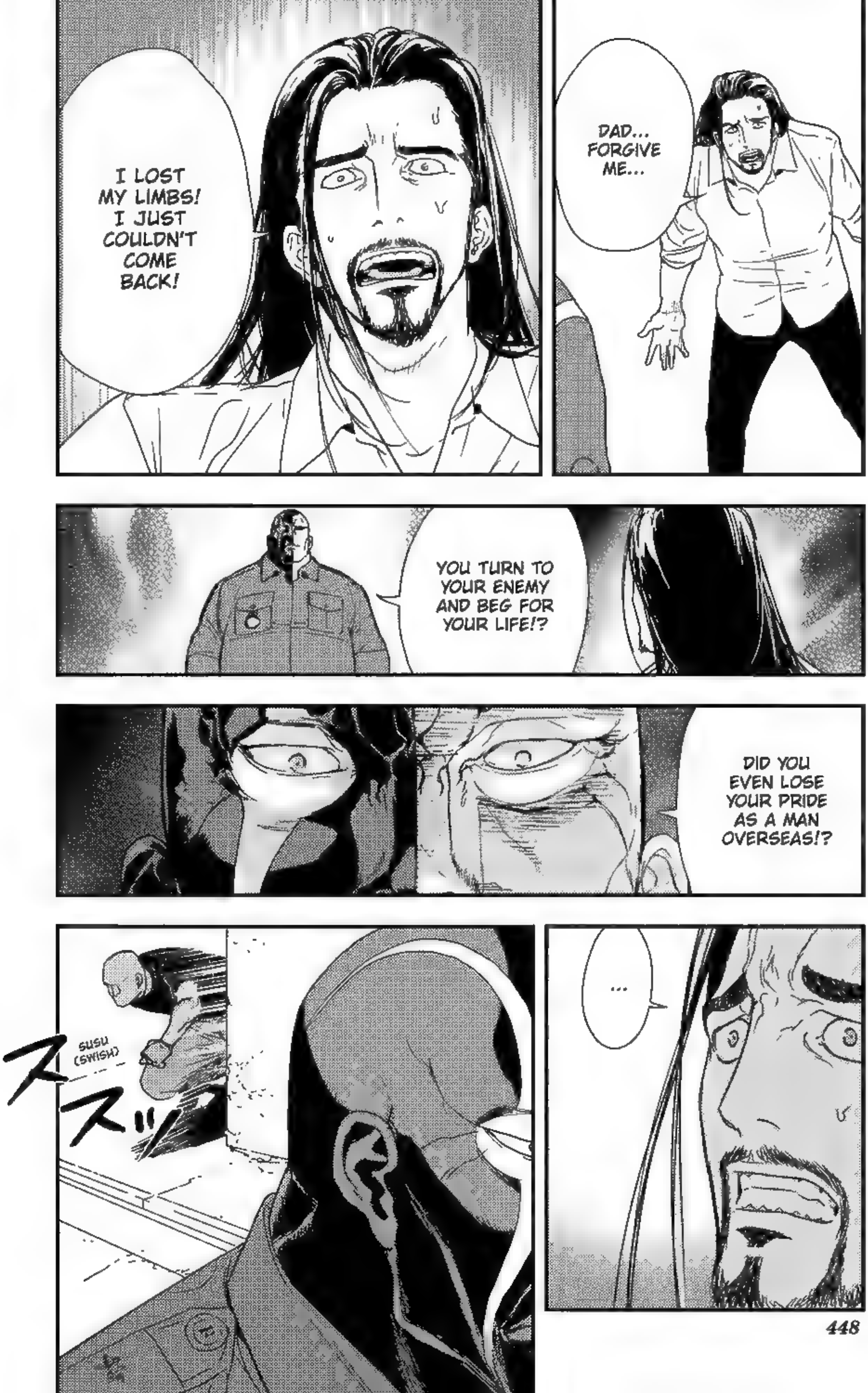

MWAH...
SHIT...
... UGH...
AAAAHH ...
I ORDERED YOU NOT TO KILL EACH OTHER, AND NONE OF YOU DARES TO DEFY ME?
IF YOU WERE HOPING TO BE TAKEN PRISONER EVENTUALLY, BE MY GUEST...
ザッ
ZA (LEAP)
YAAAH!
ダァァァ
DAAA (HUUP)

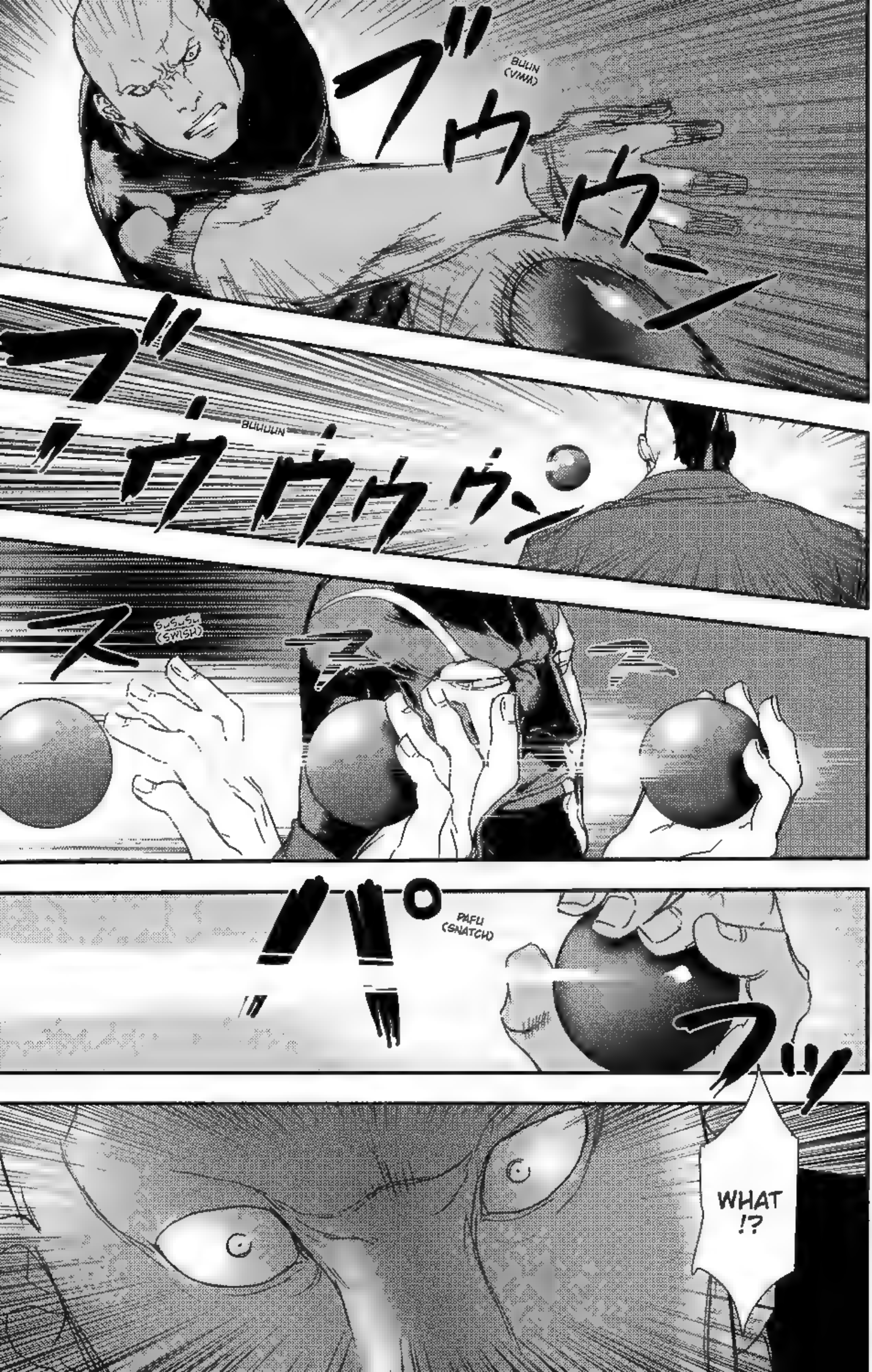

バシッ
ゴッ
ギャアア
TOO SLOW!
ブシャア
ザッ
ZASHU
SLASH
シュ

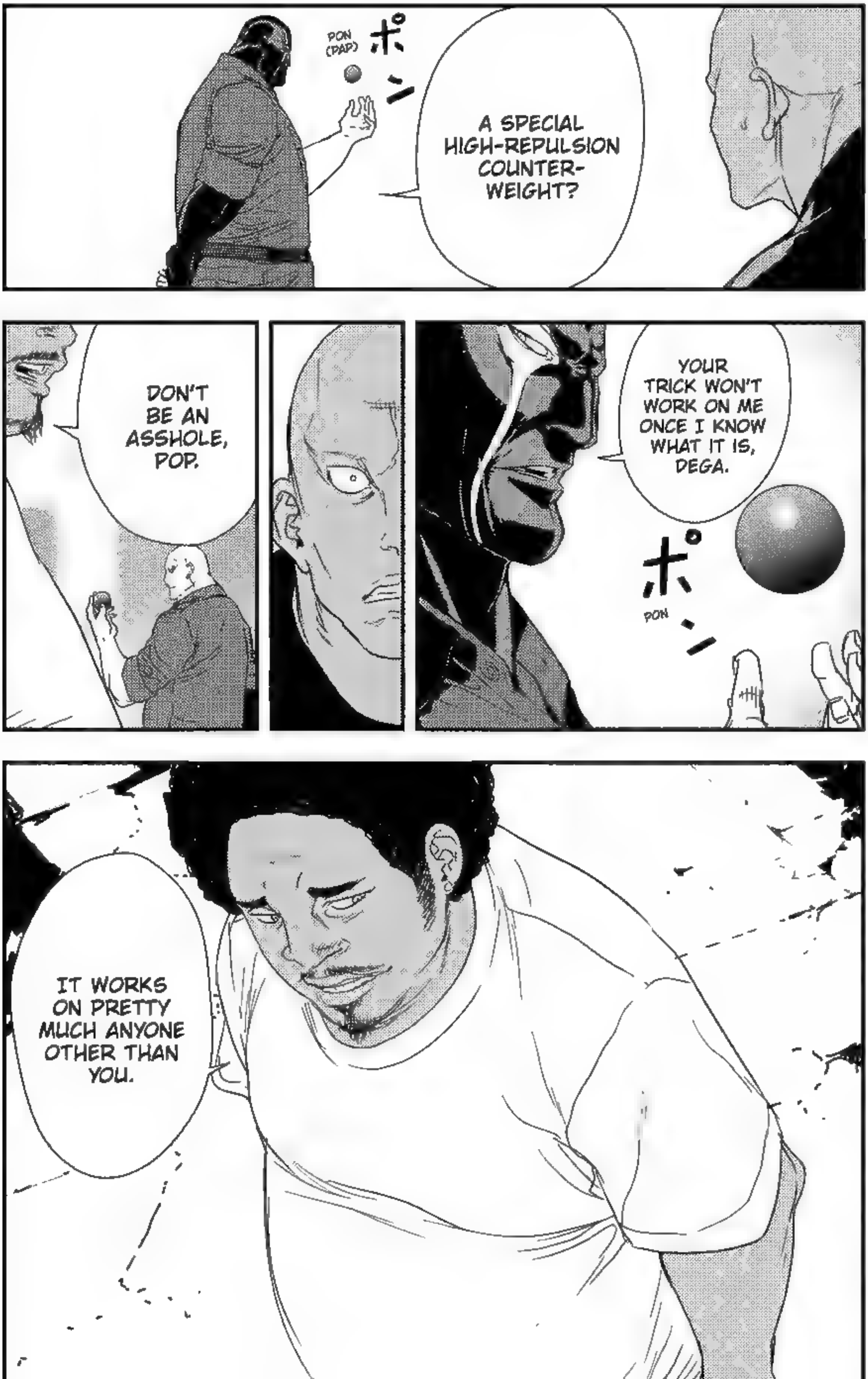

ダダ
TOO WEAK!
ブウウ
BUUU -VRM
ガッガッ
GA WHAK!
ウオオオ
UOOO (RAHHH)

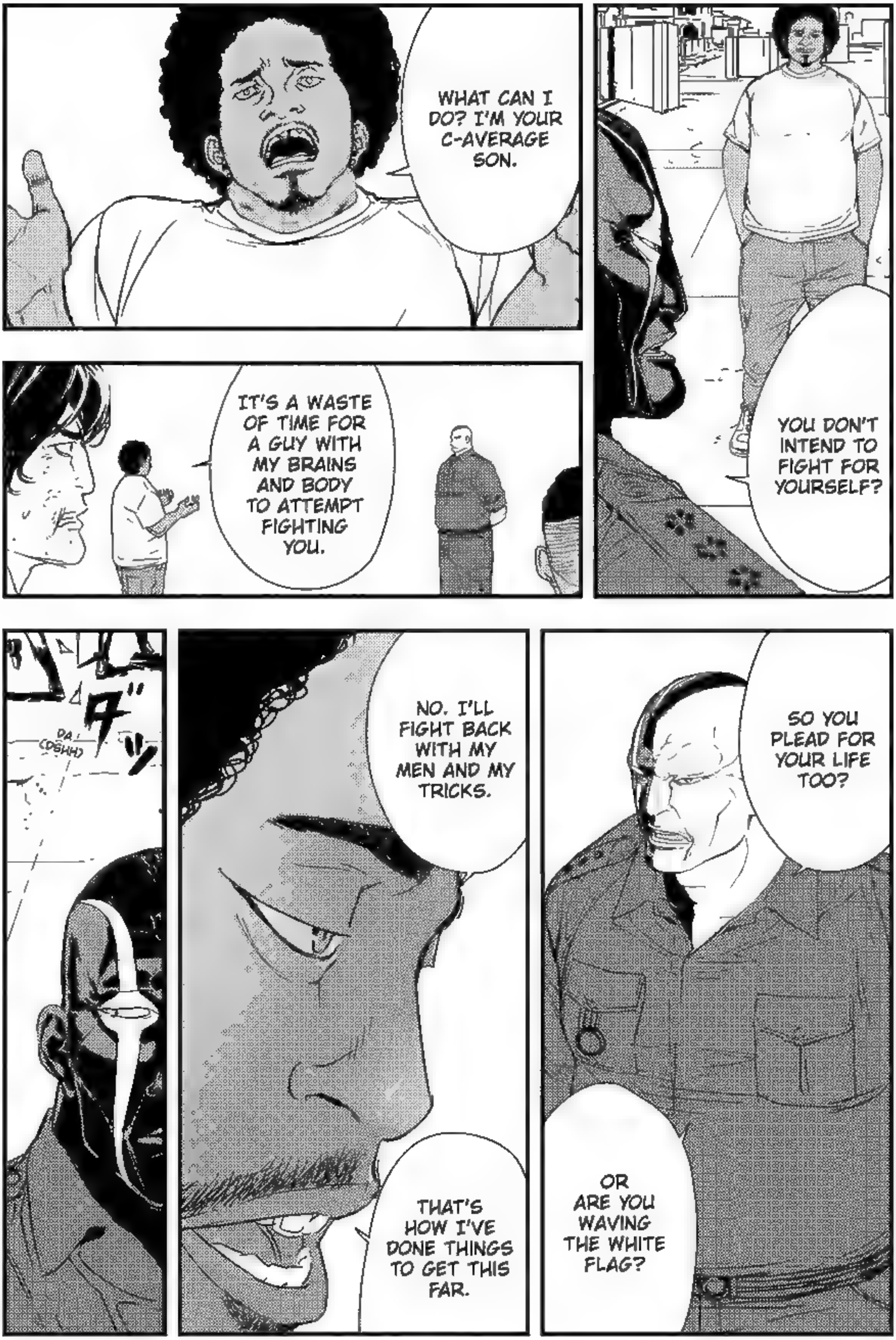

BUUN (WHOOSH)
SUSU (SWISH)
GUSA (SCRUNCH)
YOU DIDN'T SELL IT ENOUGH!
FUWAO (FWOOM)
BOKI (CRAK)
BOKI

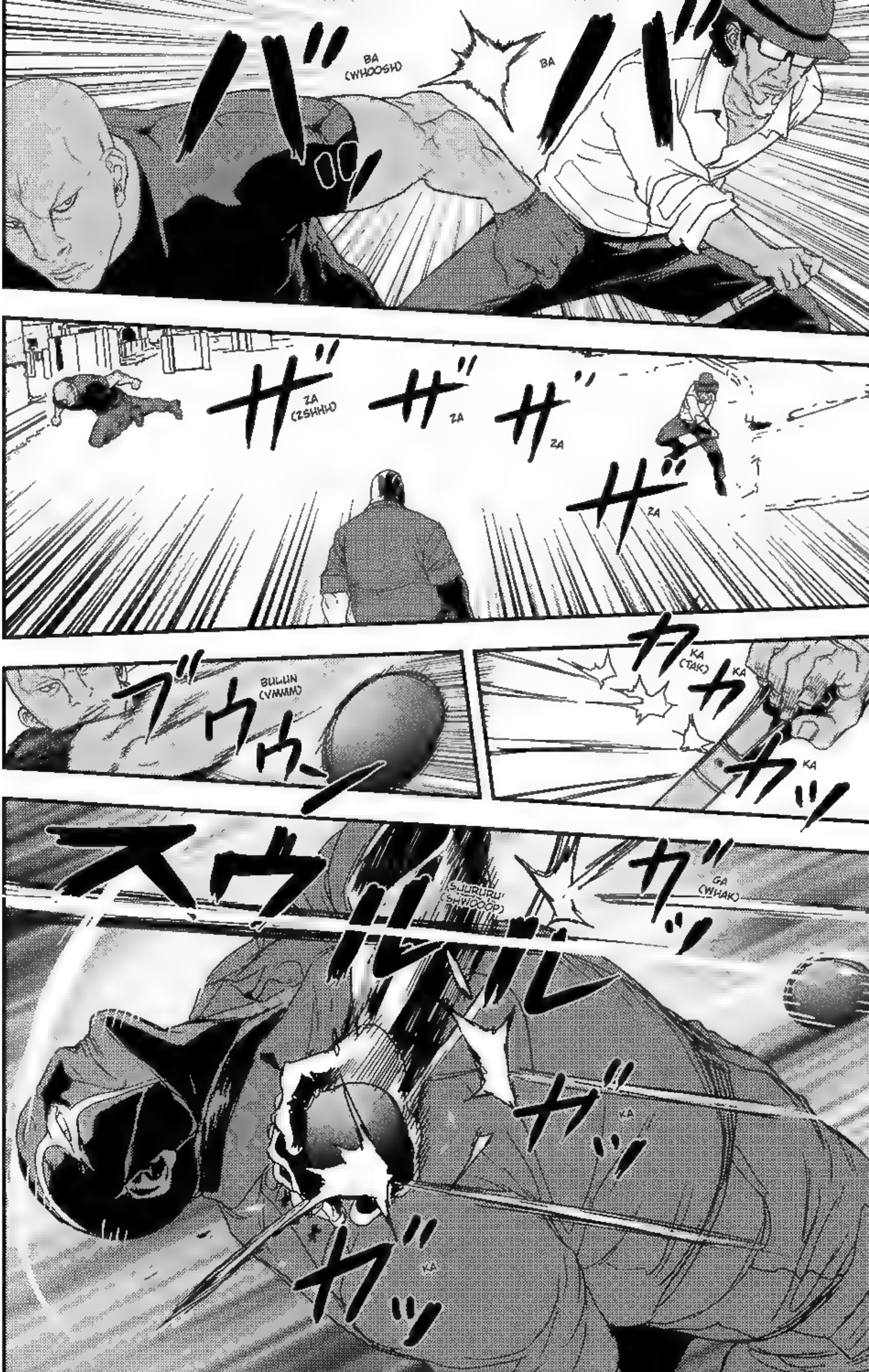

DAZAN (THADAM)
GUGAGA (KSHINK)
ガガッ
...
IDIOT CHILDREN.
YOU ARE NOT EVEN A SATISFACTORY WARM UP.

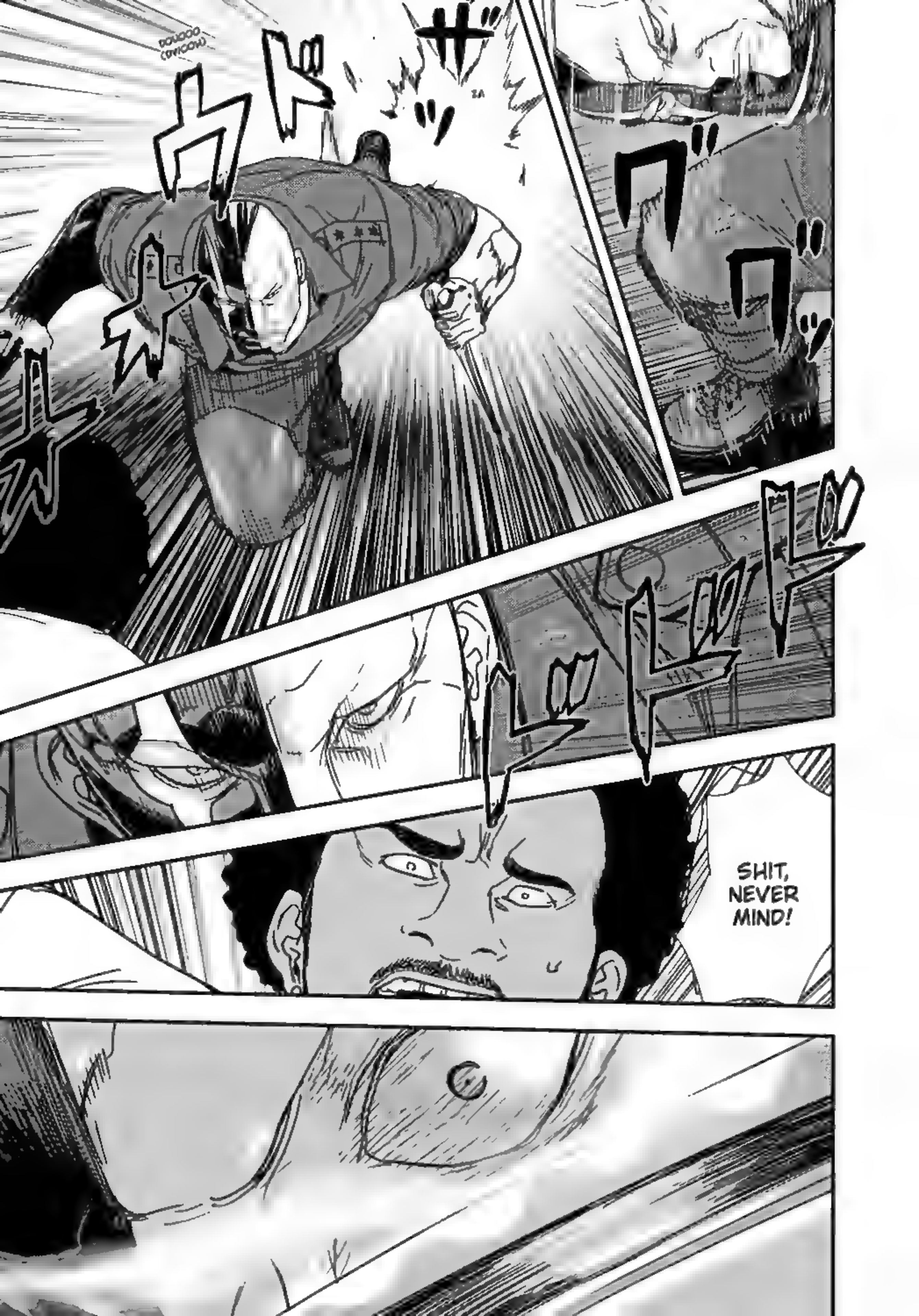

DAD... FORGIVE ME...
I LOST MY LIMBS! I JUST COULDN'T COME BACK!
YOU TURN TO YOUR ENEMY AND BEG FOR YOUR LIFE!?
DID YOU EVEN LOSE YOUR PRIDE AS A MAN OVERSEAS!?
...
スス
SUSU (SWISH)


ブウウーン
BUUN (VWM)
ブウウウウン
BUUUUN
スーースー
SUSUSU (SWISH)
パ
PAFU (SNATCH)
ブッ
WHAT !?

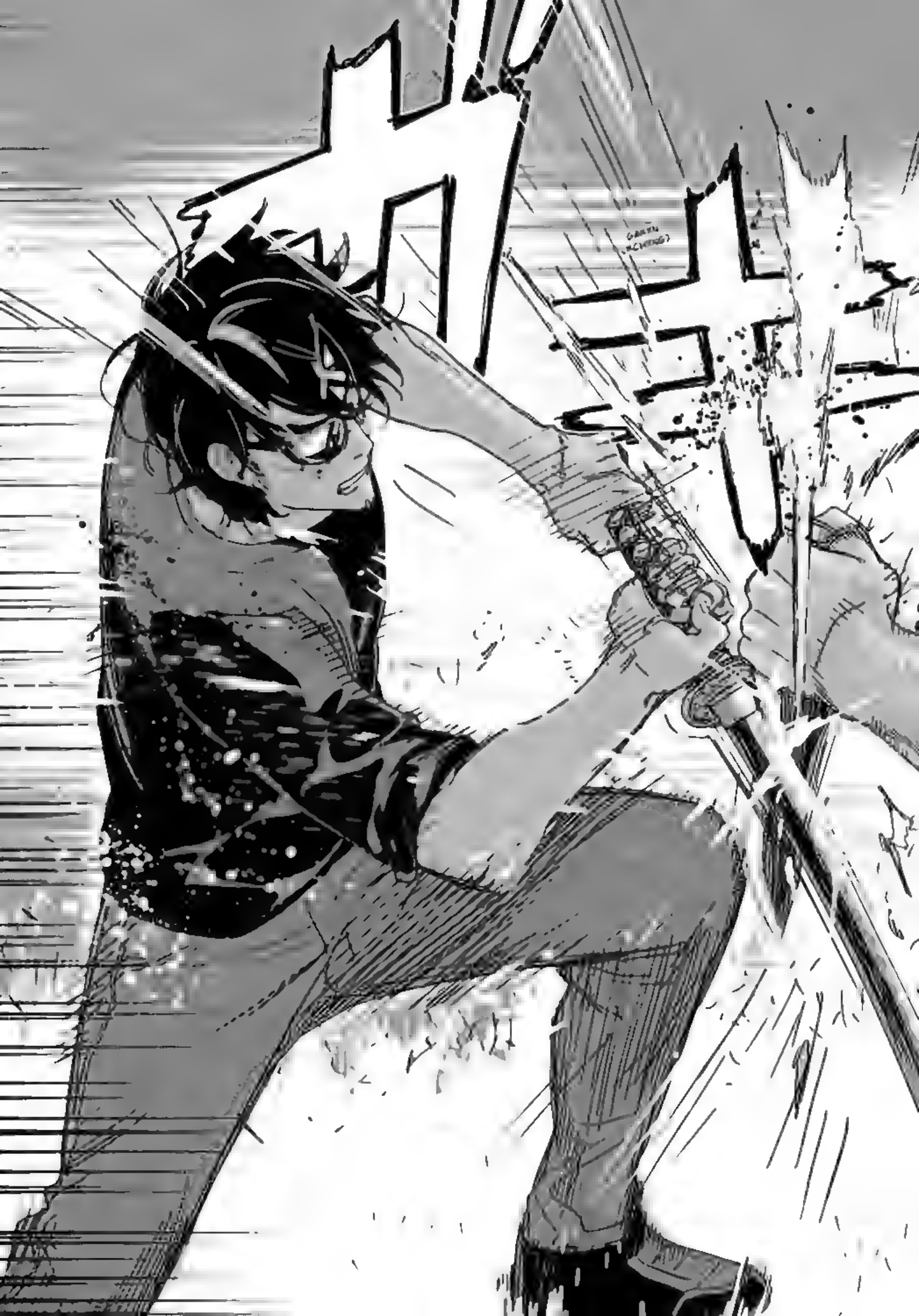

A SPECIAL HIGH-REPULSION COUNTER-WEIGHT?
ポン
PON (PAP)
YOUR TRICK WON'T WORK ON ME ONCE I KNOW WHAT IT IS, DEGA.
ポン
PON
DON'T BE AN ASSHOLE, POP.
IT WORKS ON PRETTY MUCH ANYONE OTHER THAN YOU.

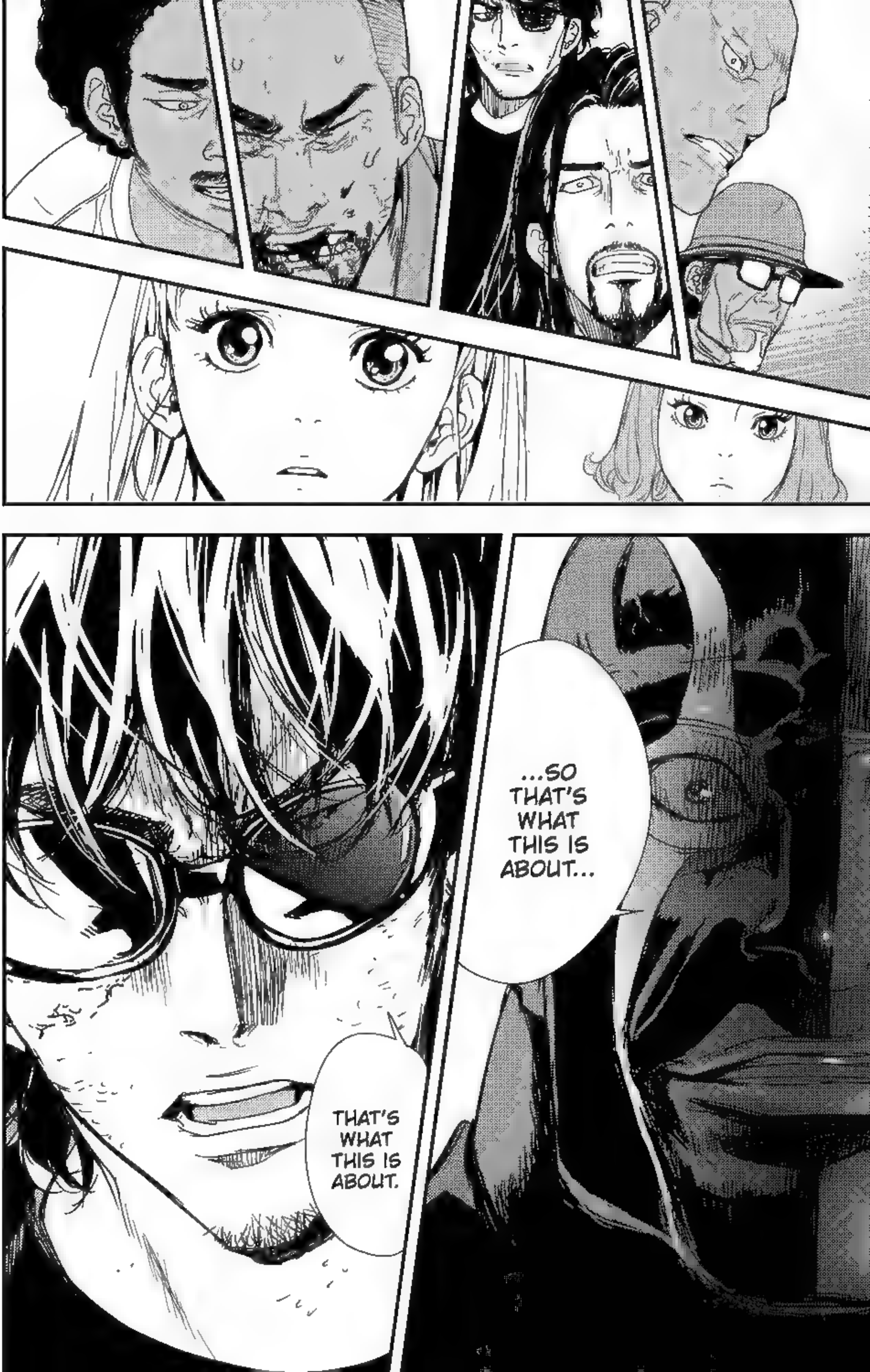

YOU DON'T INTEND TO FIGHT FOR YOURSELF?
WHAT CAN I DO? I'M YOUR C-AVERAGE SON.
IT'S A WASTE OF TIME FOR A GUY WITH MY BRAINS AND BODY TO ATTEMPT FIGHTING YOU.
SO YOU PLEAD FOR YOUR LIFE TOO?
OR ARE YOU WAVING THE WHITE FLAG?
NO. I'LL FIGHT BACK WITH MY MEN AND MY TRICKS.
THAT'S HOW I'VE DONE THINGS TO GET THIS FAR.
ダッ
DA (DSHH)

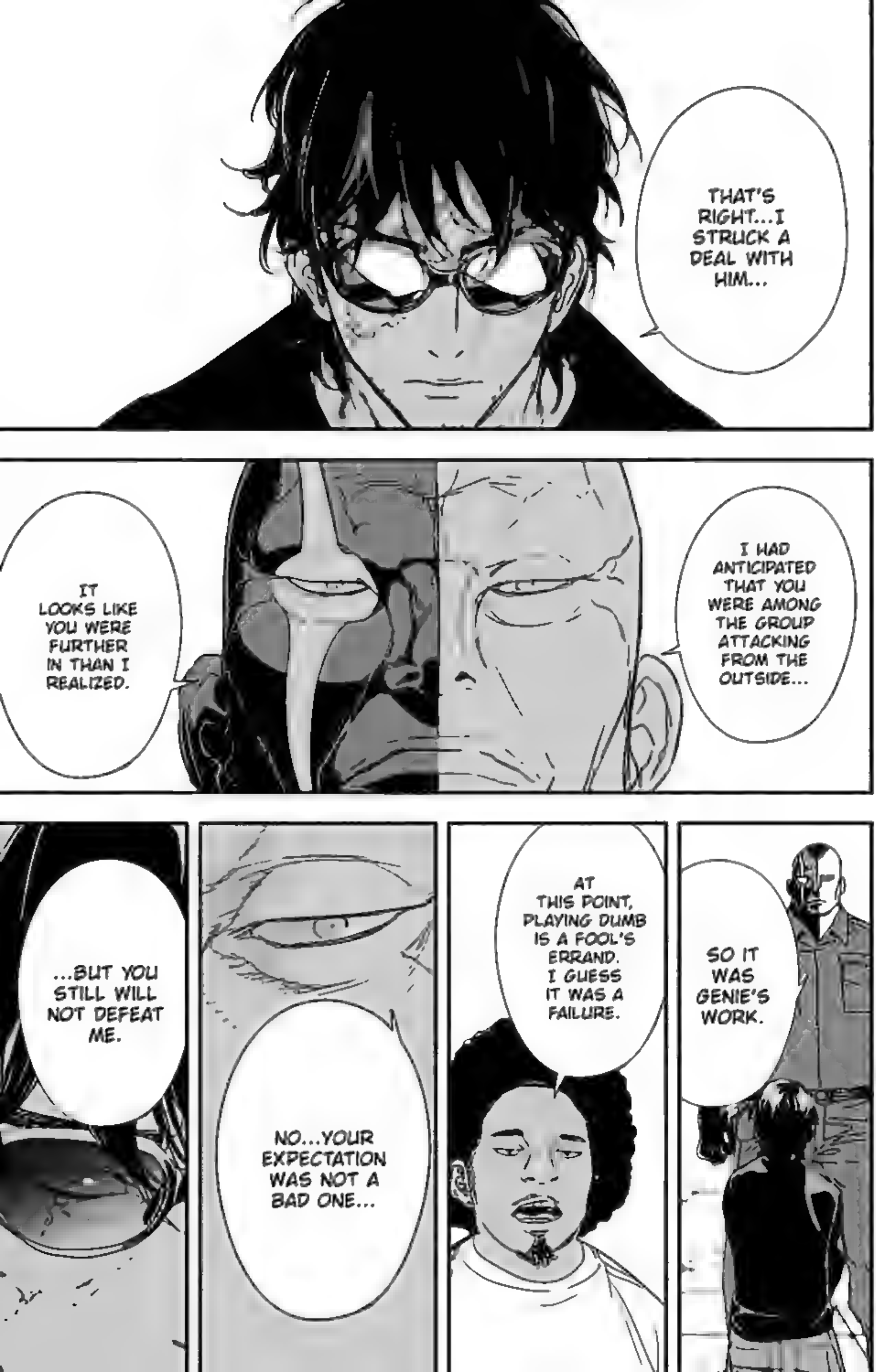

バ
BA
バ
BA (WHOOSH)
ザ
ZA (ZSHH)
ザ
ZA
ザ
ZA
ザ
ZA
カ
KA (TAK)
カ
KA
カッ
KA
ブウゥーン
BULUN (VMMM)
スウルル
SURURU (SHWOOOP)
ガッ
GA (WHAK)
ガッ
KA
ガッ
KA

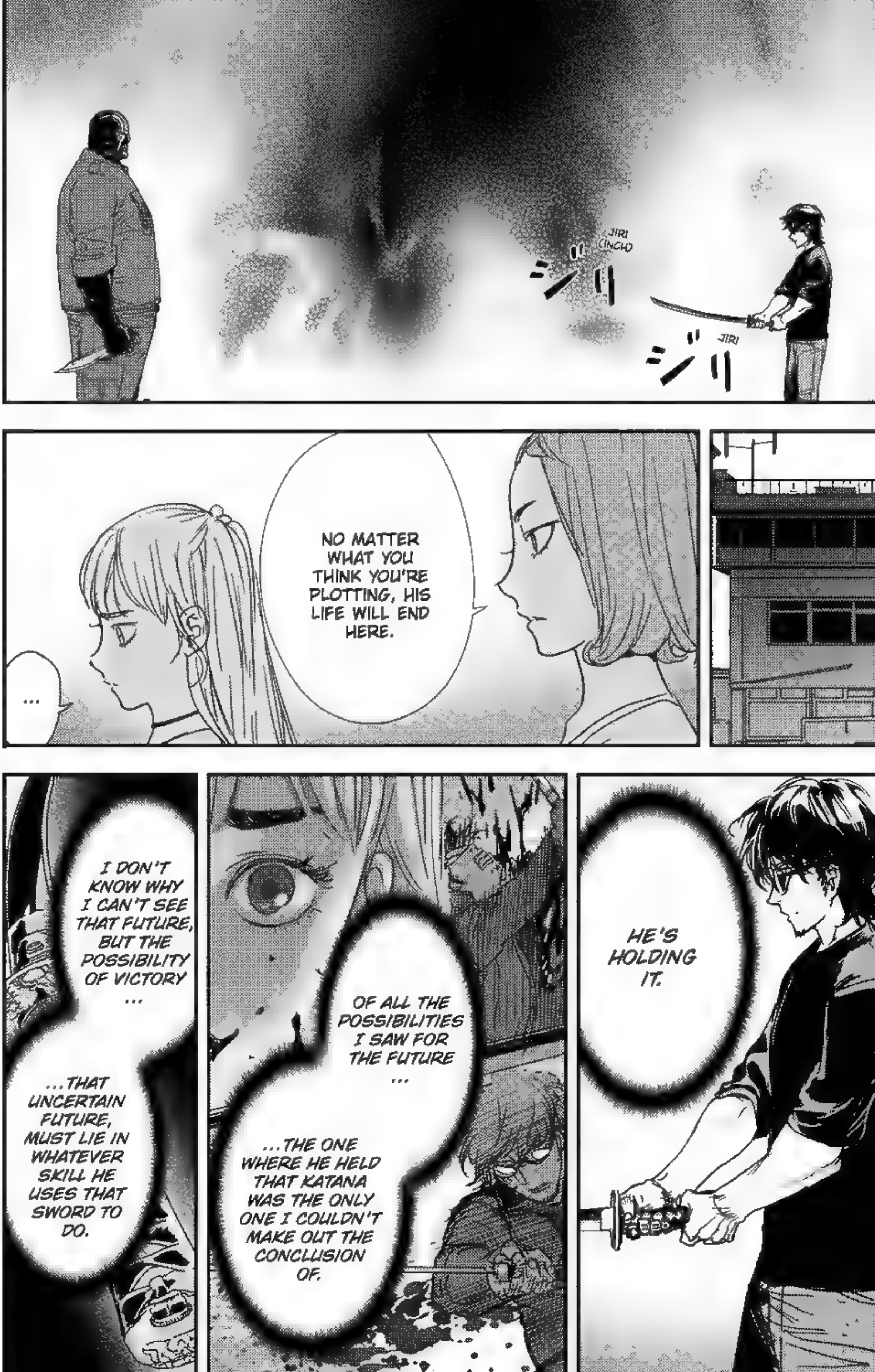

ザッ
ZA
DOWOOO (DWOOM)
ドウッ
グッ グッ
ドドドッ
SHIT, NEVER MIND!

ガキィィン

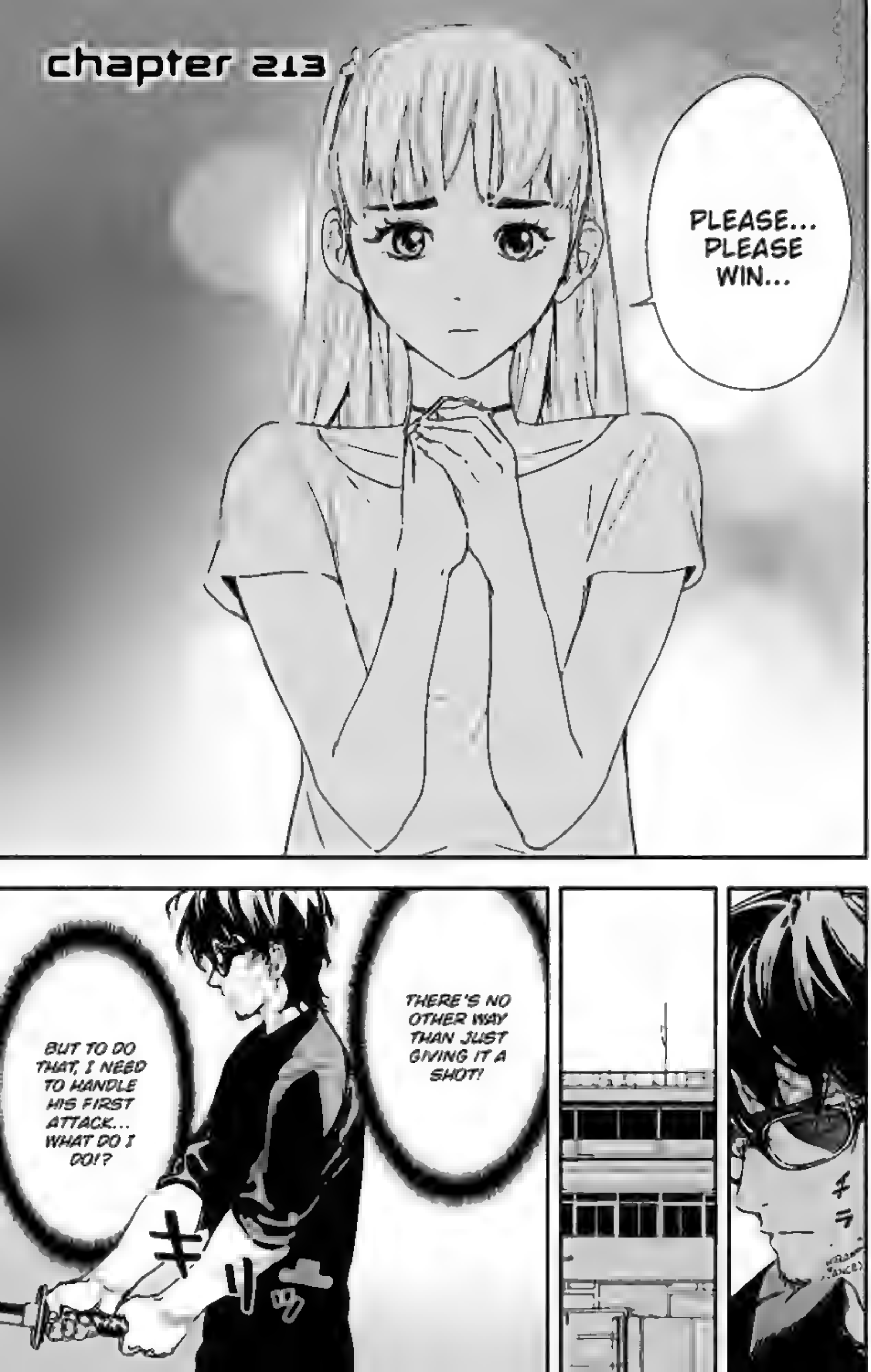

ガキン
GAKIN

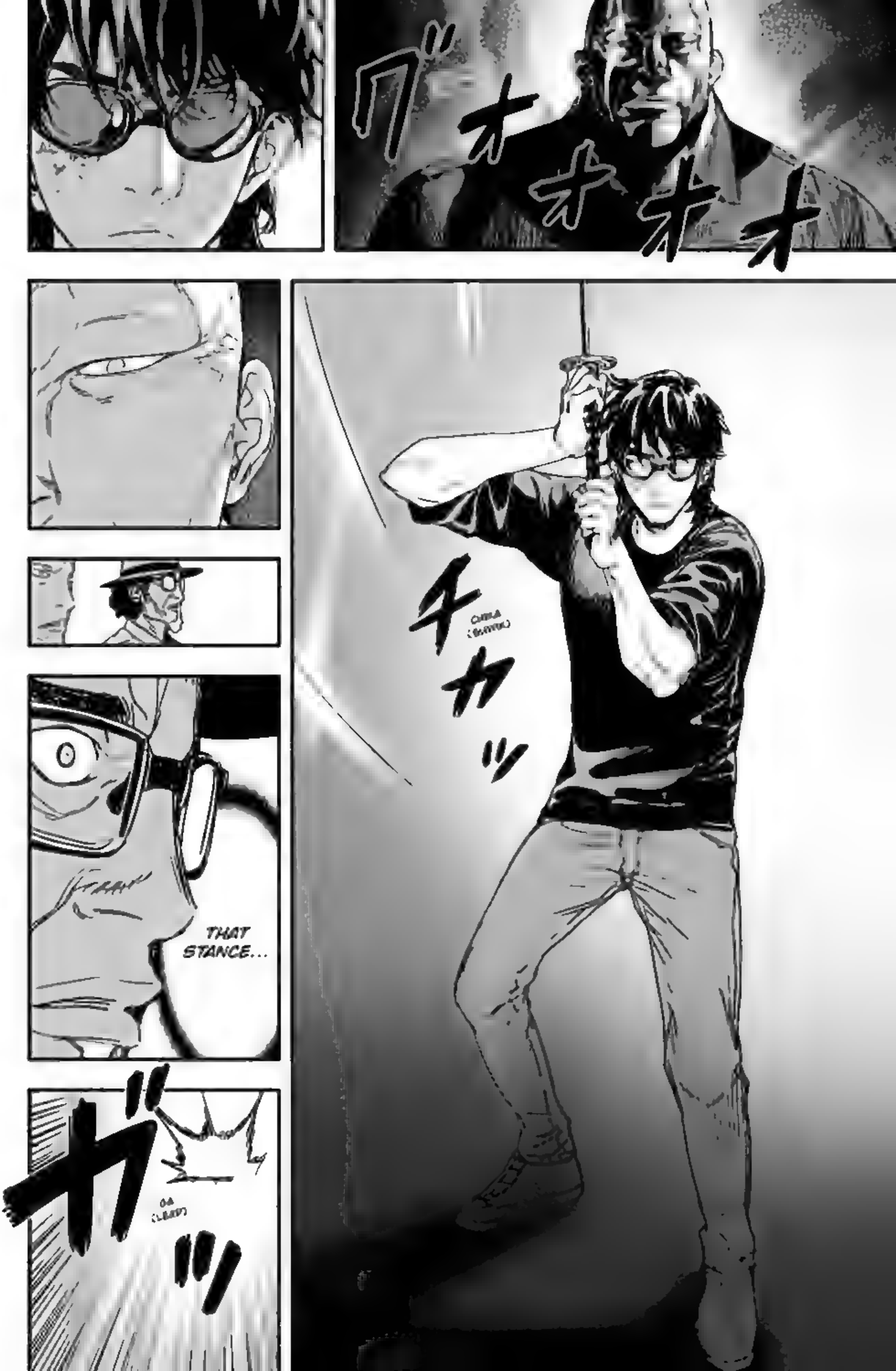

...SO THAT'S WHAT THIS IS ABOUT...
THAT'S WHAT THIS IS ABOUT.

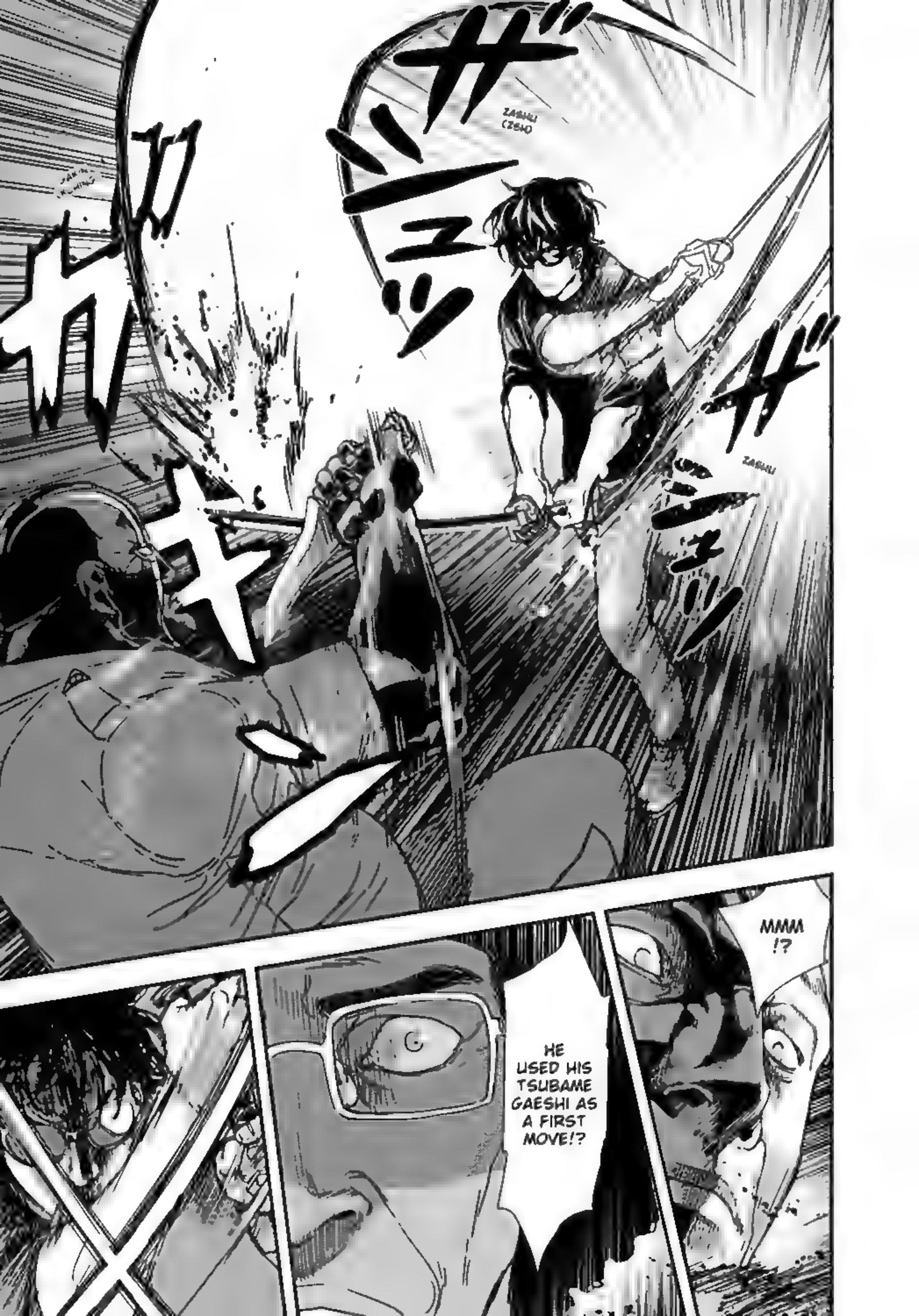

THAT'S RIGHT...I STRUCK A DEAL WITH HIM...
I HAD ANTICIPATED THAT YOU WERE AMONG THE GROUP ATTACKING FROM THE OUTSIDE...
IT LOOKS LIKE YOU WERE FURTHER IN THAN I REALIZED.
SO IT WAS GENIE'S WORK.
AT THIS POINT, PLAYING DUMB IS A FOOL'S ERRAND. I GUESS IT WAS A FAILURE.
NO...YOUR EXPECTATION WAS NOT A BAD ONE...
...BUT YOU STILL WILL NOT DEFEAT ME.

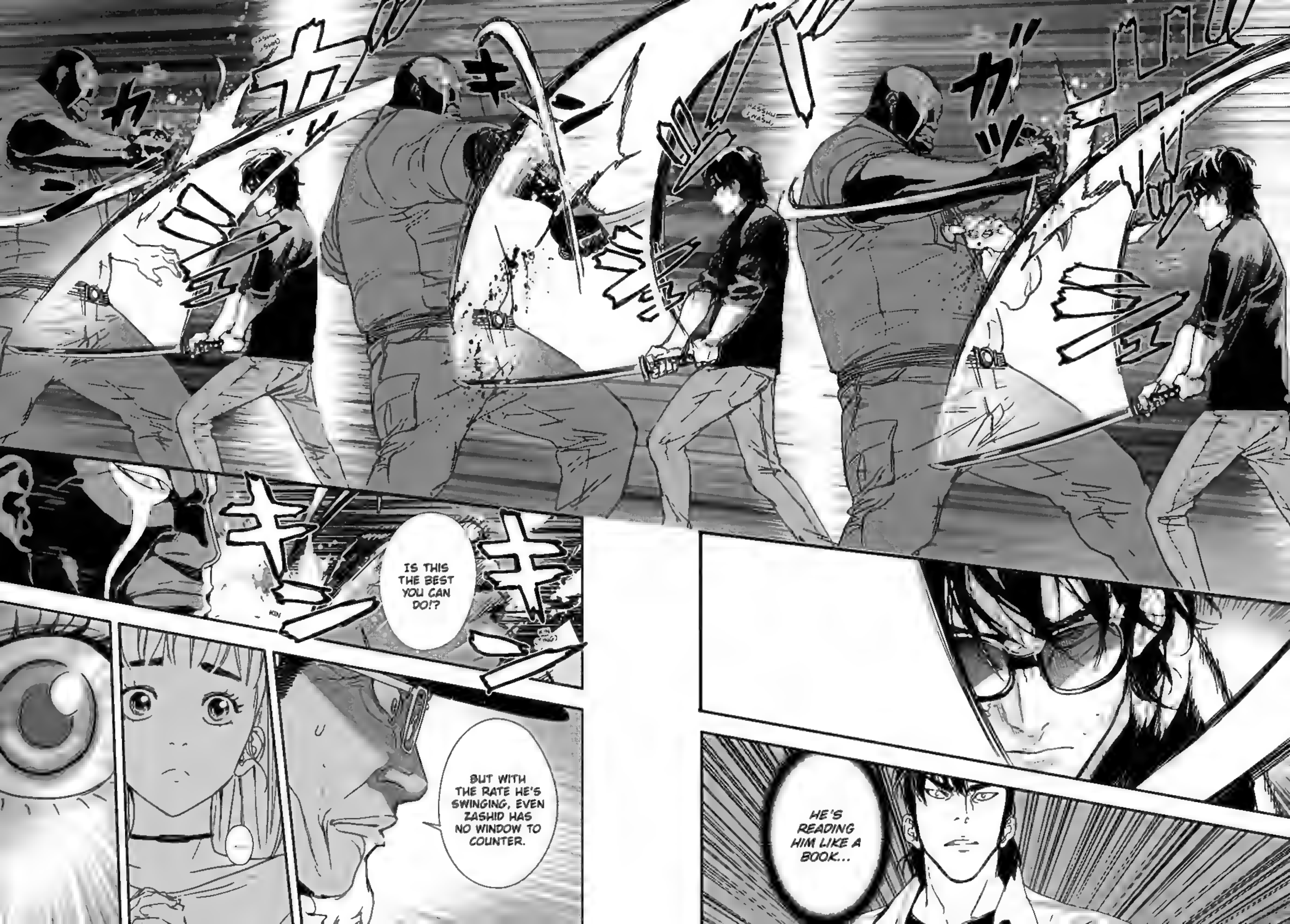

ジリ
JIRI (INCH)
ジリ
JIRI
NO MATTER WHAT YOU THINK YOU'RE PLOTTING, HIS LIFE WILL END HERE.
...
HE'S HOLDING IT.
OF ALL THE POSSIBILITIES I SAW FOR THE FUTURE...
...THE ONE WHERE HE HELD THAT KATANA WAS THE ONLY ONE I COULDN'T MAKE OUT THE CONCLUSION OF.
I DON'T KNOW WHY I CAN'T SEE THAT FUTURE, BUT THE POSSIBILITY OF VICTORY...
...THAT UNCERTAIN FUTURE, MUST LIE IN WHATEVER SKILL HE USES THAT SWORD TO DO.

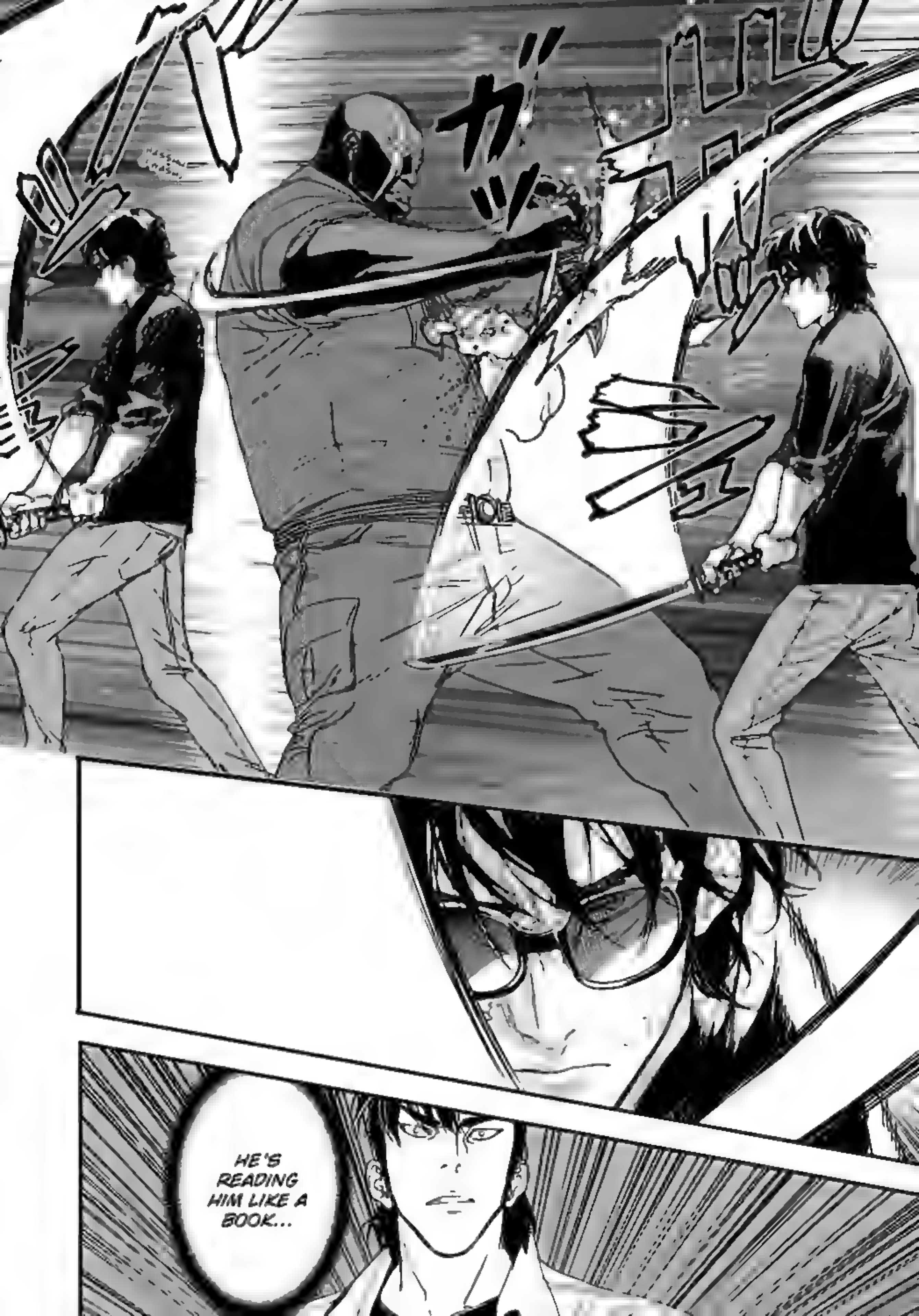
chapter 213

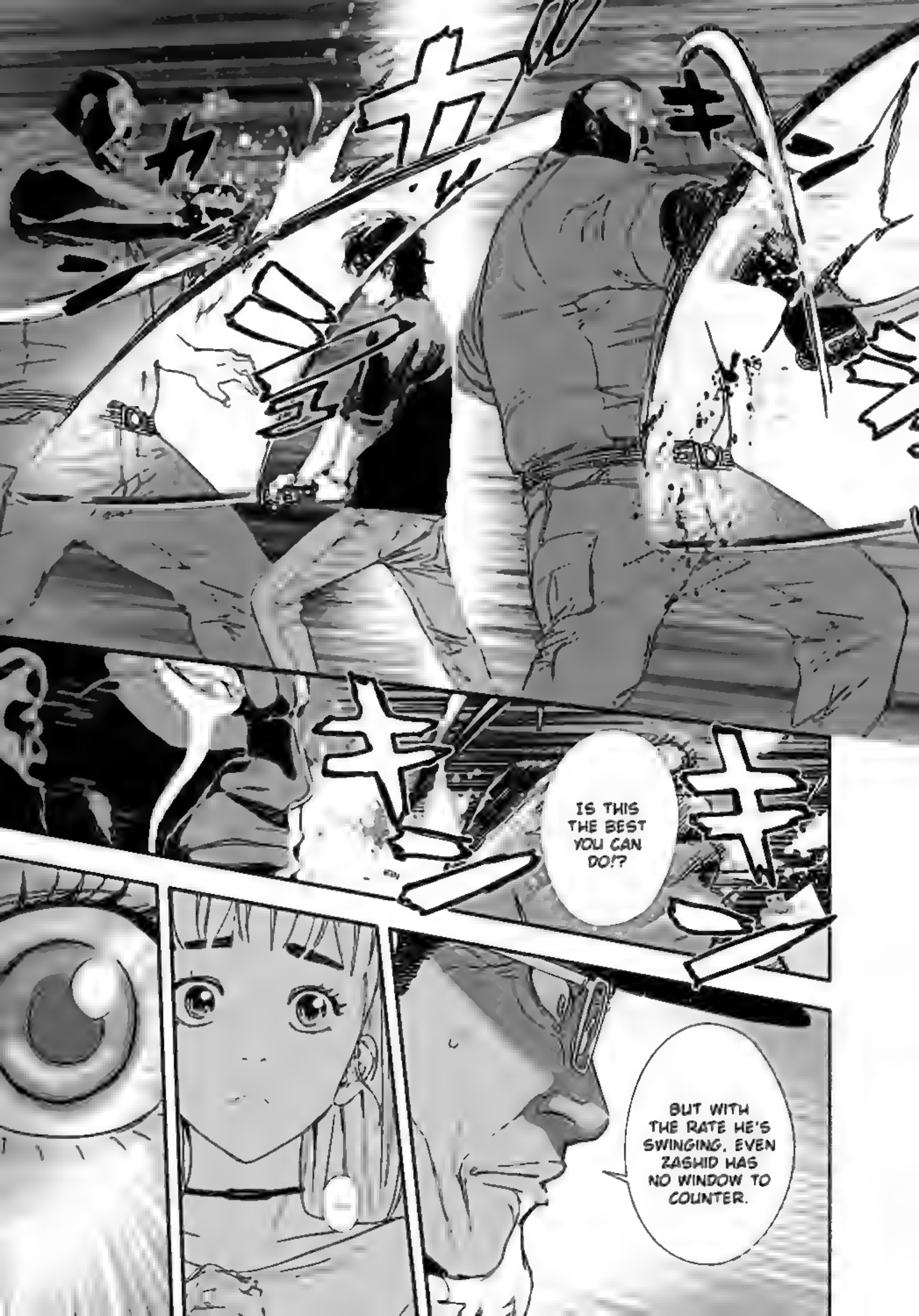

PLEASE... PLEASE WIN...
THERE'S NO OTHER WAY THAN JUST GIVING IT A SHOT!
BUT TO DO THAT, I NEED TO HANDLE HIS FIRST ATTACK... WHAT DO I DO!?
イラ

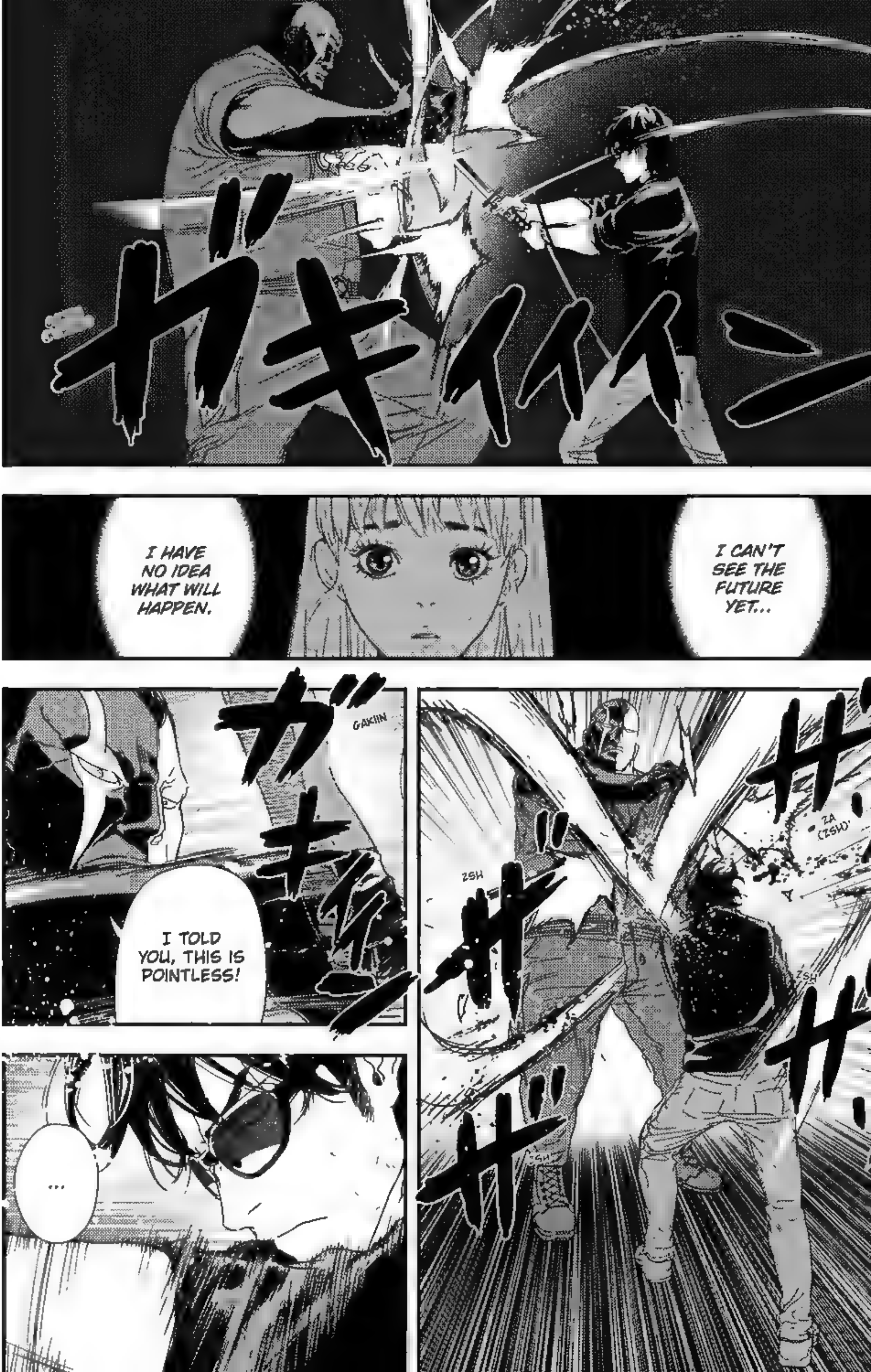

グオオオオ
チカッ
CHIKA (SHWIK)
THAT STANCE...
ガッ
GA (LEAP)

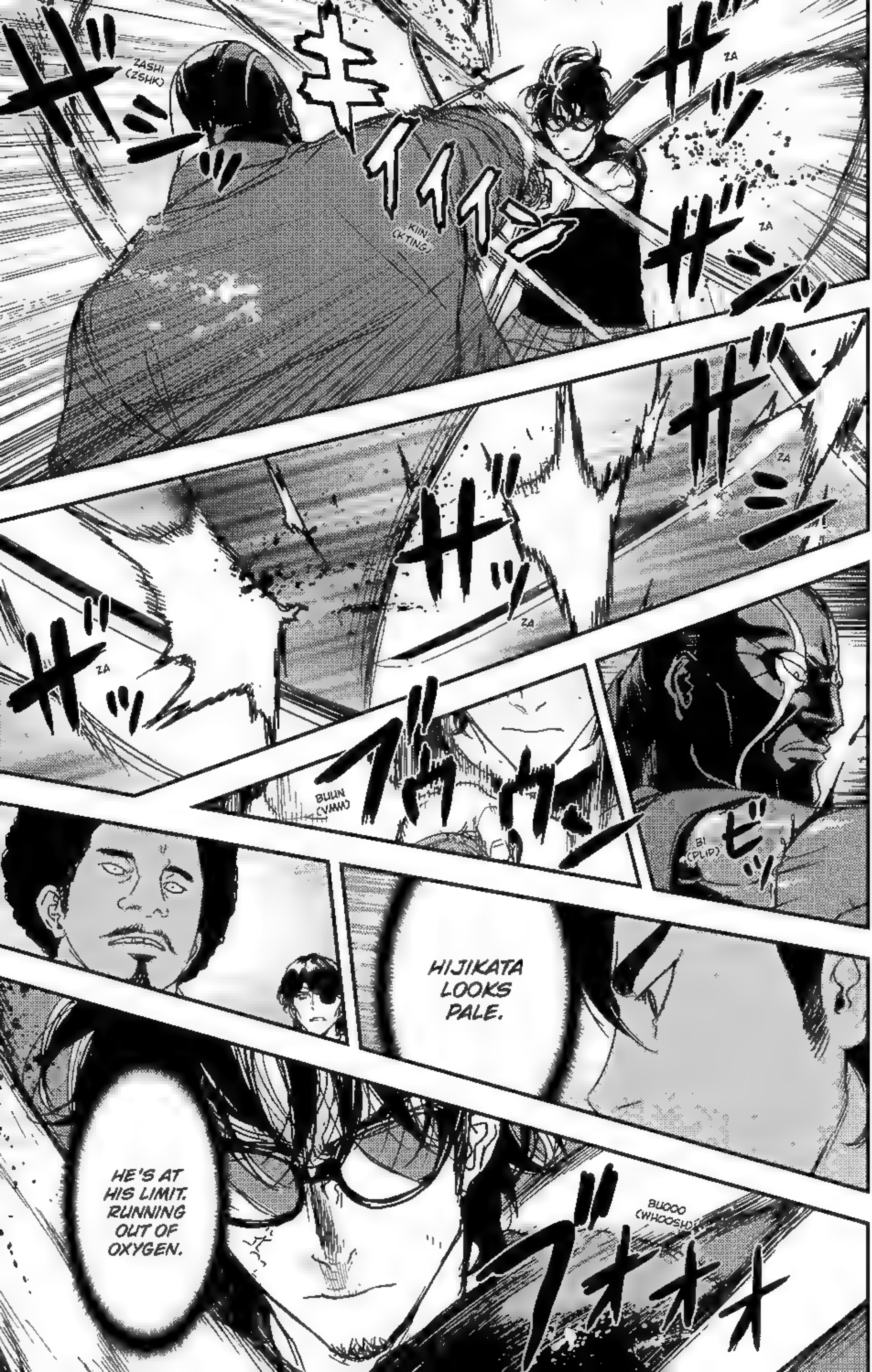

ZASHU (ZSH)
ZASHU
MMM !?
HE USED HIS TSUBAME GAESHI AS A FIRST MOVE!?

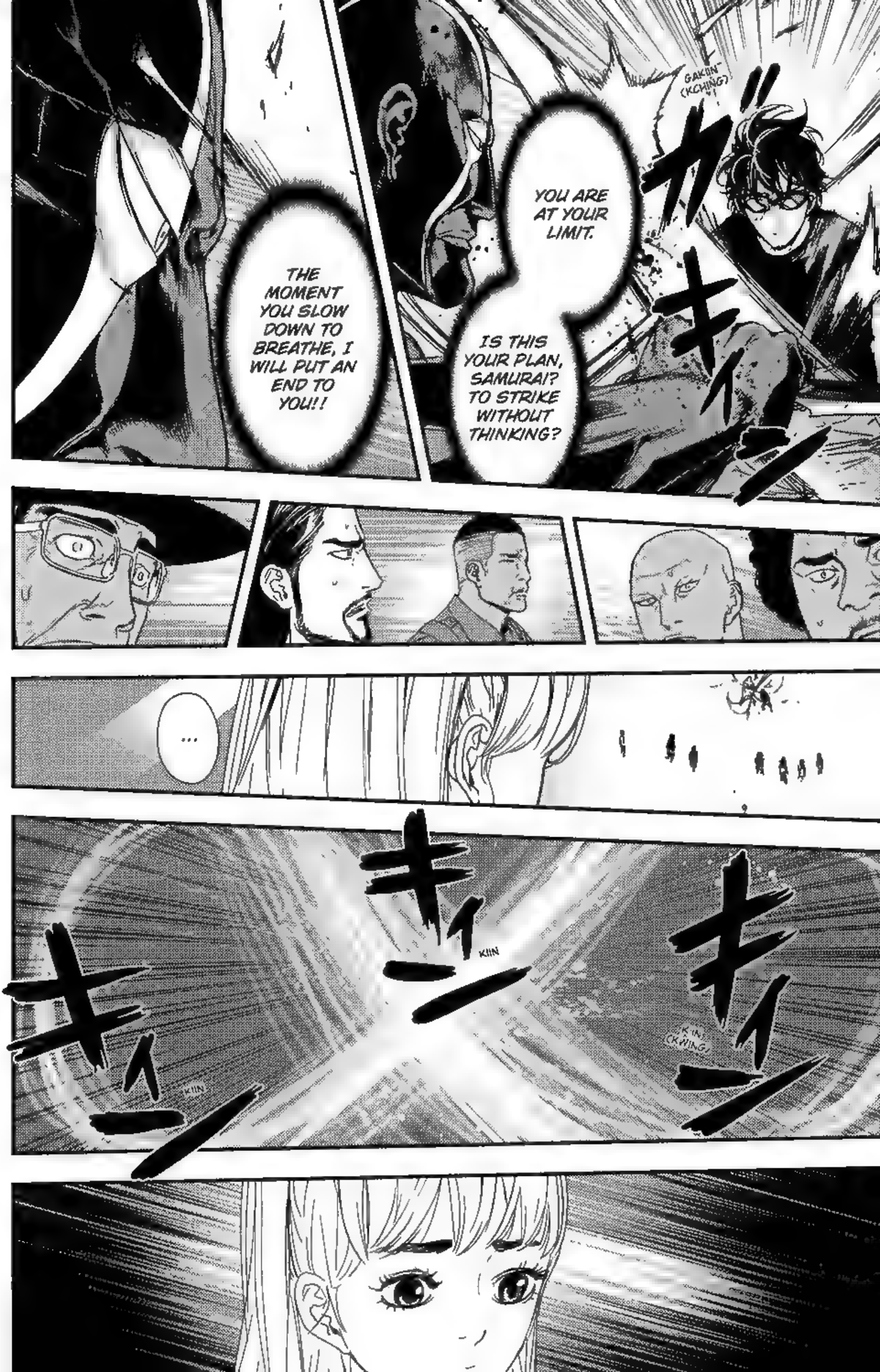

HASSHU HASHU
ZASSHU ZASHO
HE'S READING HIM LIKE A BOOK...
IS THIS THE BEST YOU CAN DO!?
KIN
(KIN KING)
BUT WITH THE RATE HE'S SWINGING, EVEN ZASHID HAS NO WINDOW TO COUNTER.

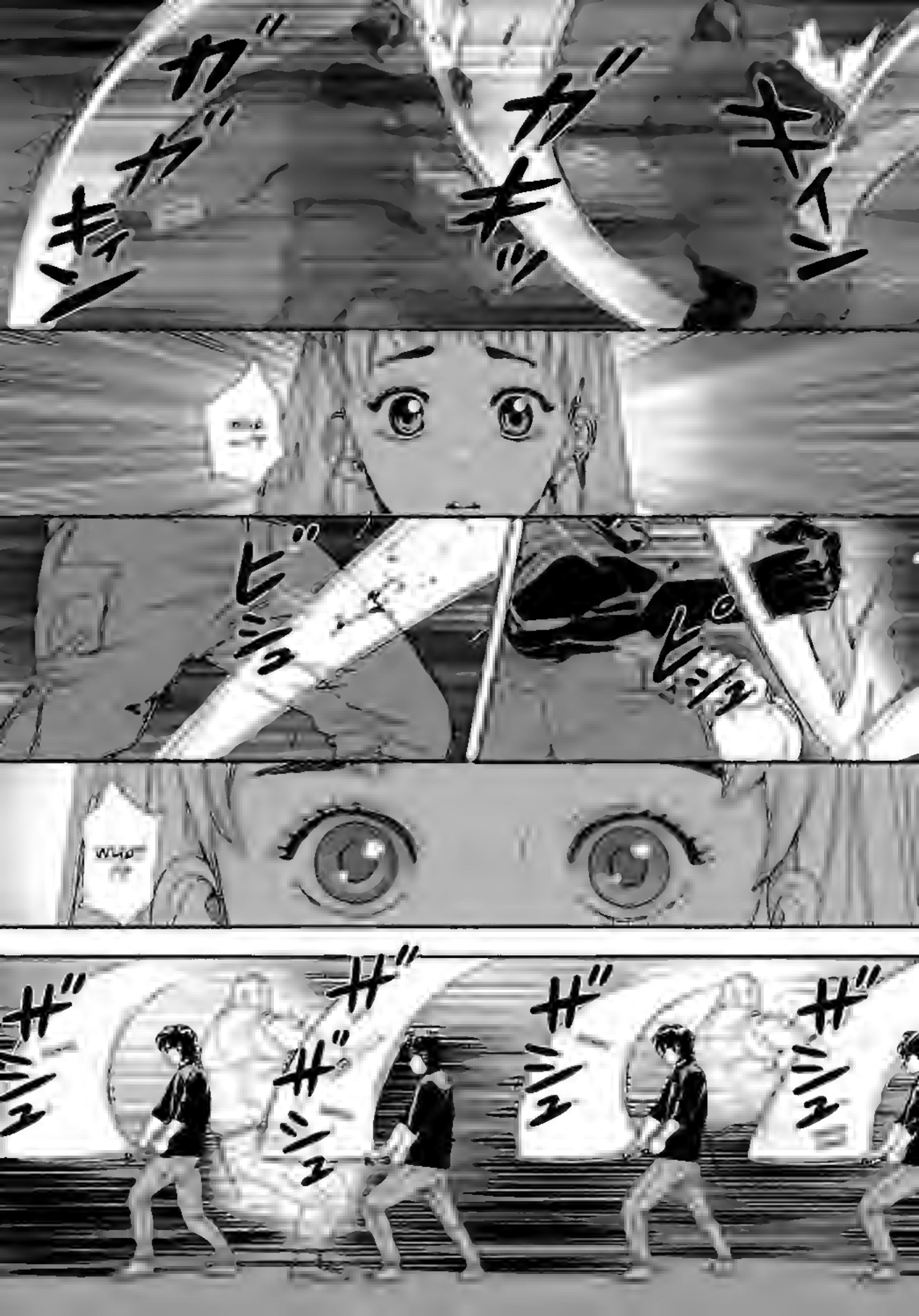

ガッ
HASSH!
WASH!
HE'S READING HIM LIKE A BOOK...

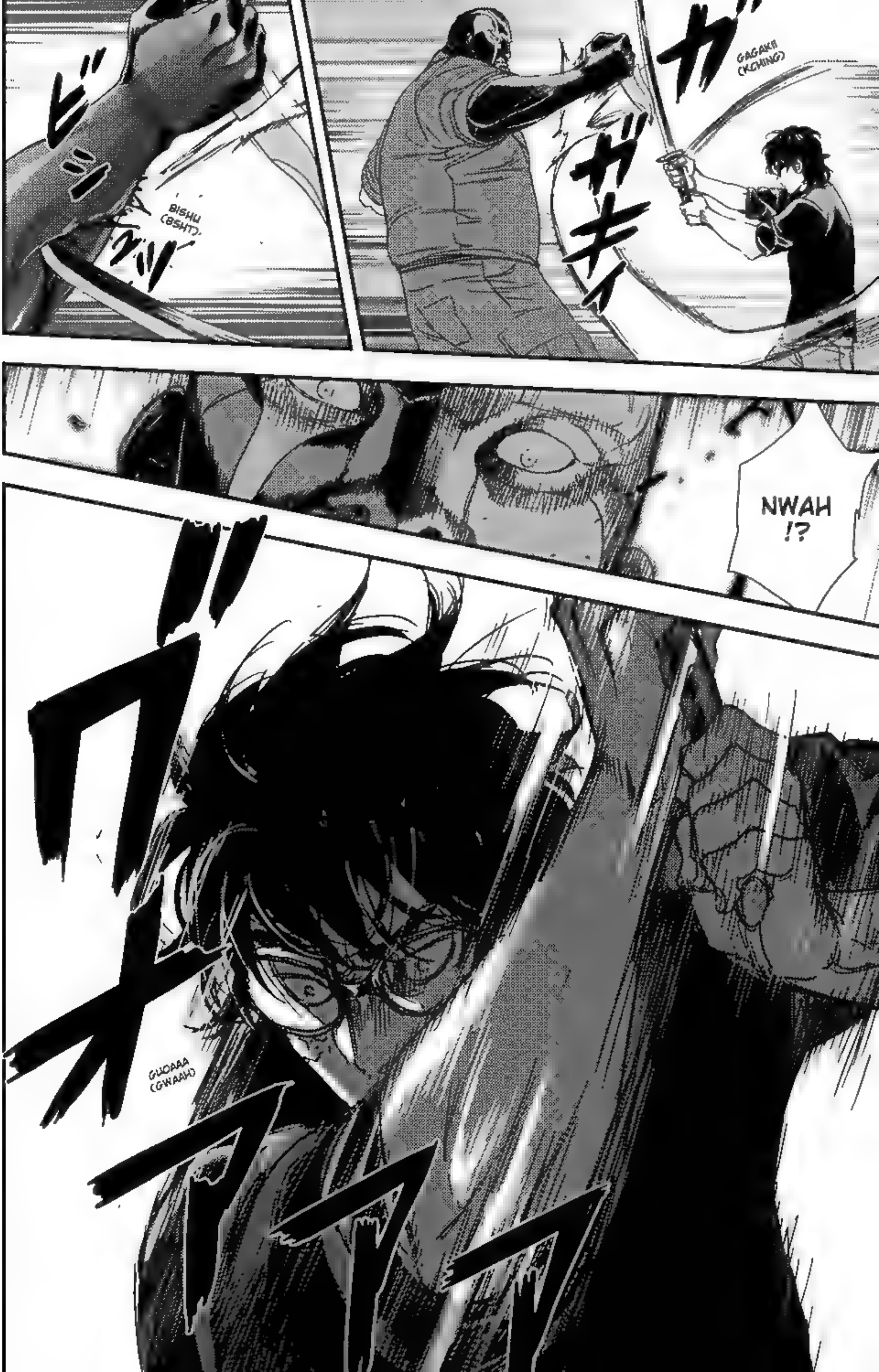

ガキン
キン
ギン
キン
KIN
IS THIS THE BEST YOU CAN DO!?
BUT WITH THE RATE HE'S SWINGING, EVEN ZASHID HAS NO WINDOW TO COUNTER.

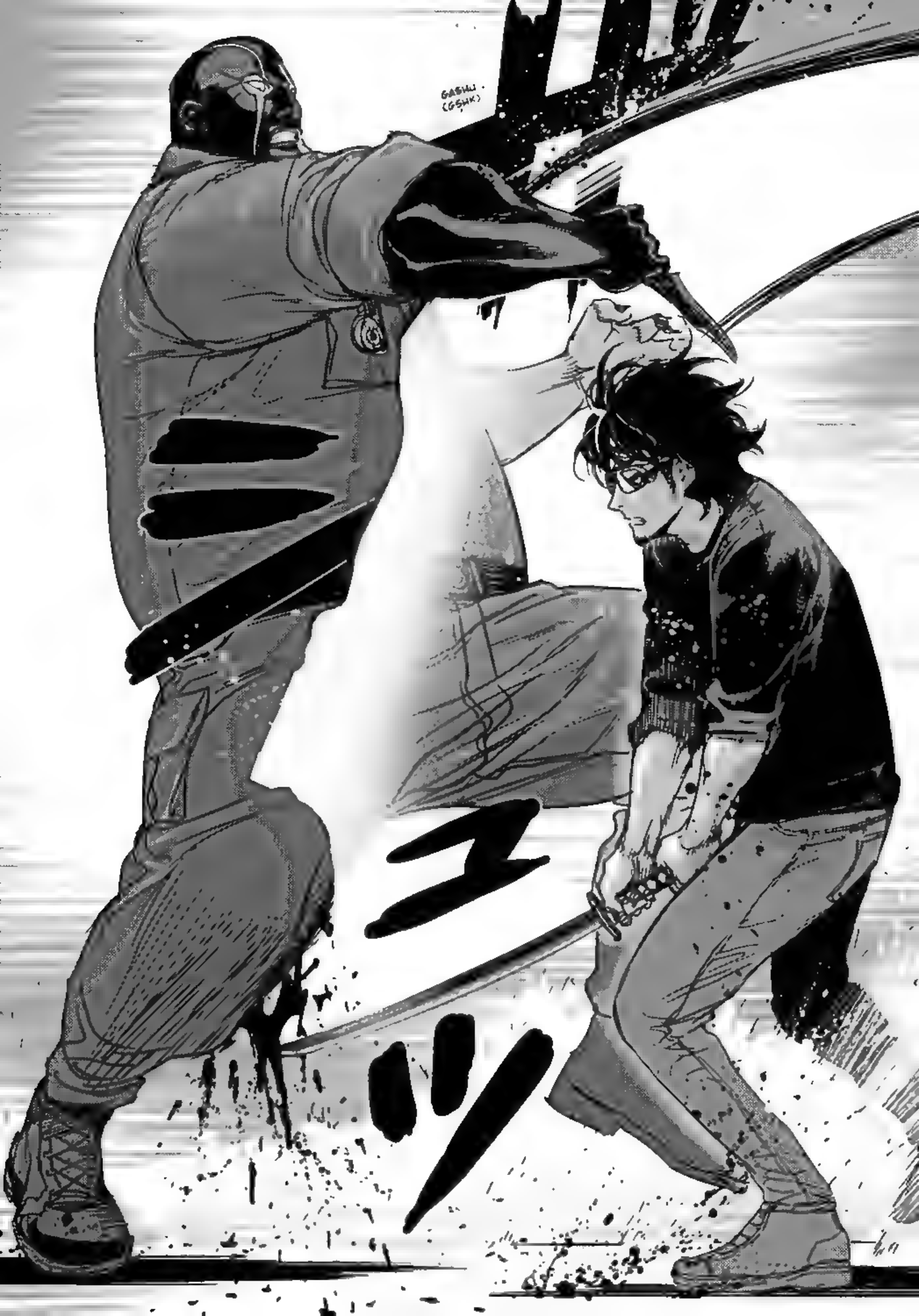

ガギイイン
I CAN'T SEE THE FUTURE YET...
I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT WILL HAPPEN.
ザッ
ZA (ZSH)
ザッ
ZSH
ザッ
ZSH
ザッ
ZSH
ガキイン
GAKIIN
I TOLD YOU, THIS IS POINTLESS!
...

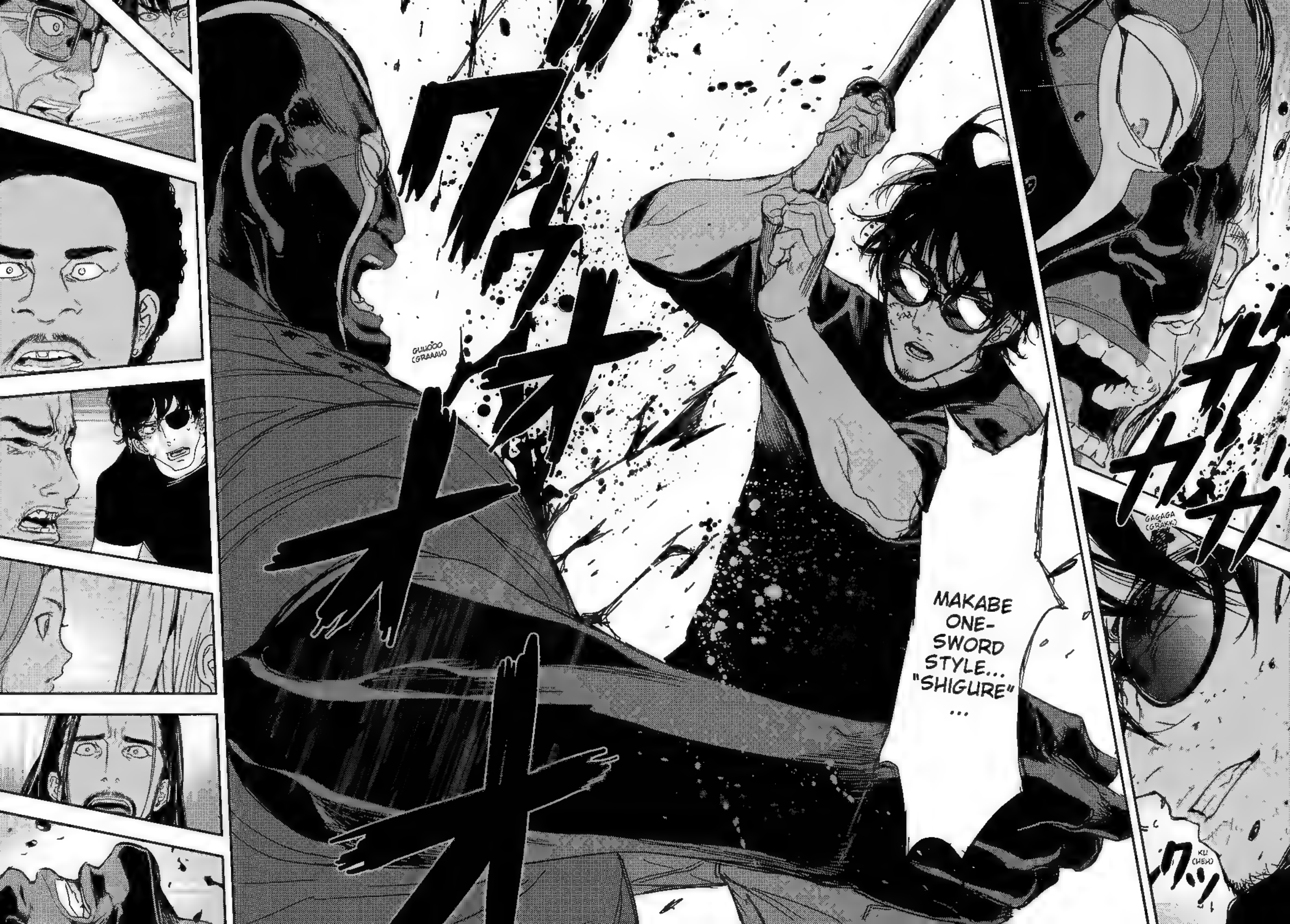

ZA
ZA
KIIN (KTING)
ZASHI (ZSHK)
ZA
ZA
ZA
BI (PLIP)
BULN (VMM)
HIJIKATA LOOKS PALE.
BUOOO (WHOOSH)
HE'S AT HIS LIMIT. RUNNING OUT OF OXYGEN.

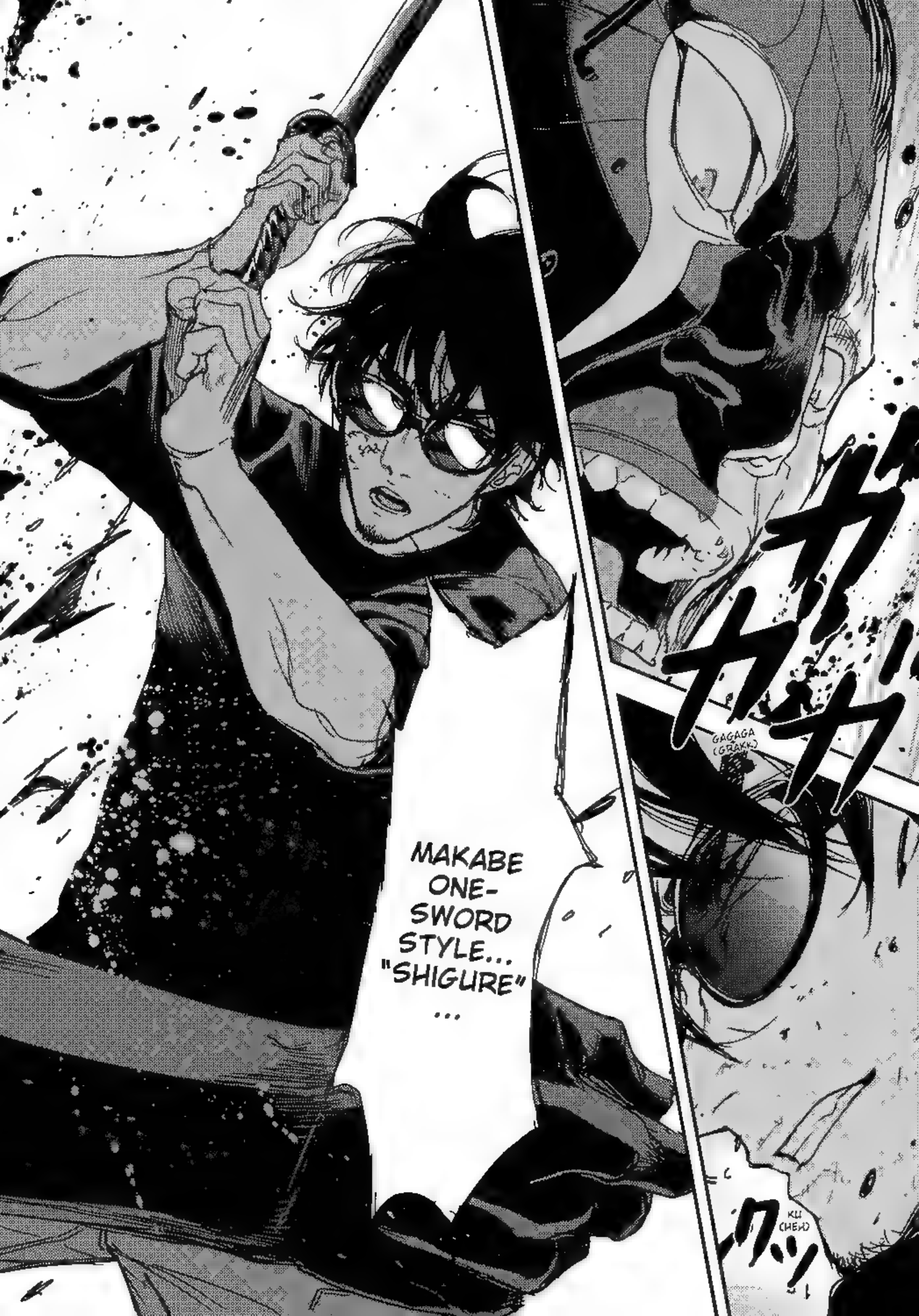

ガキィン
GAKIN (KCHING)
YOU ARE AT YOUR LIMIT.
IS THIS YOUR PLAN, SAMURAI? TO STRIKE WITHOUT THINKING?
THE MOMENT YOU SLOW DOWN TO BREATHE, I WILL PUT AN END TO YOU!!
...
キィーン
KIIN (KWING)
キィーン
KIIN
キィーン
KIIN


キィン
ガキッ
ガガキィン
ピシッ
ビシッ
ザシュ
ザシュ
ザザシュ
ザシュ

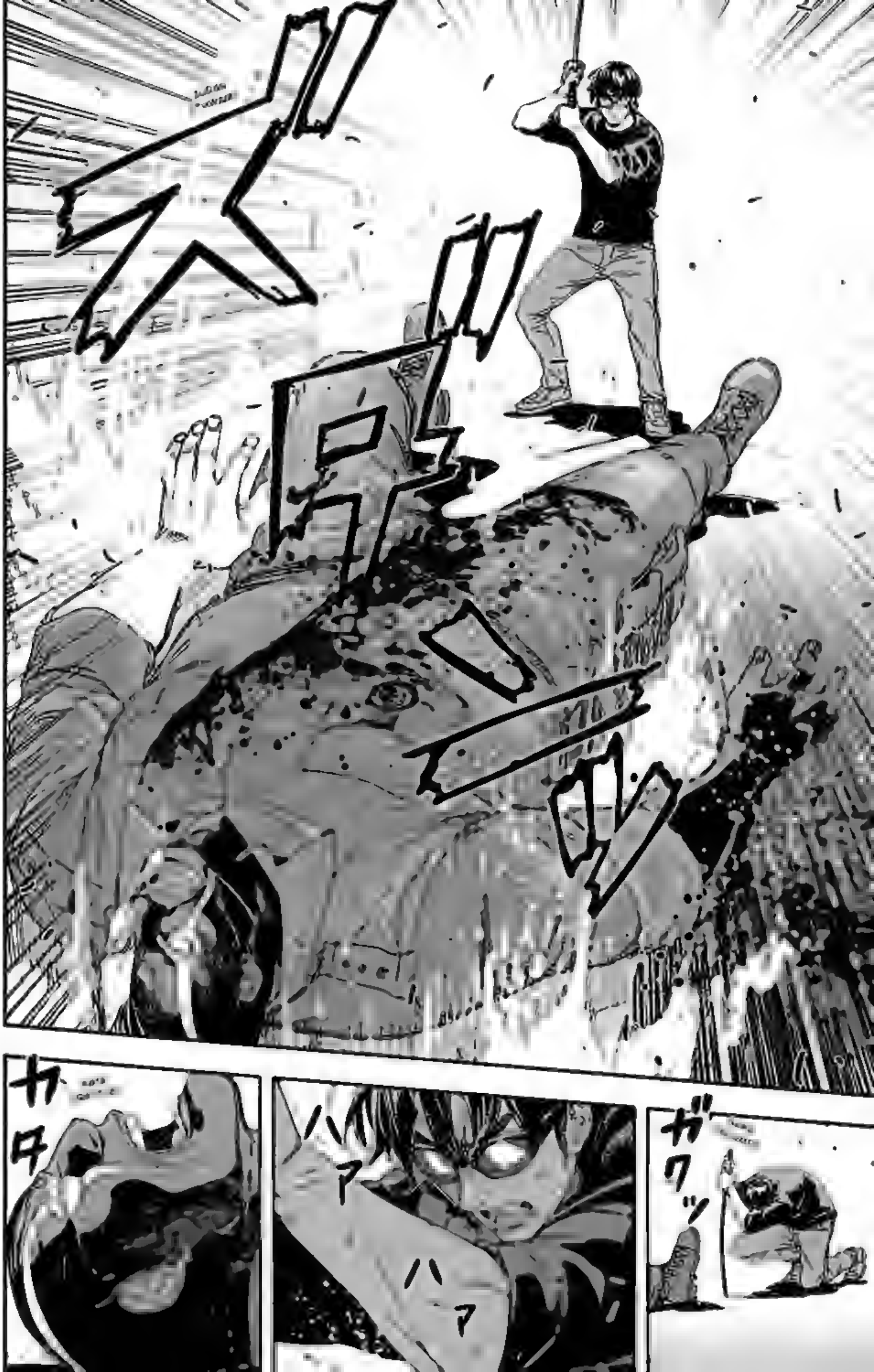

GAGAKII (KCHING)
BISHU (BSHT)
NWAH !?
GUOAAA (GWAAH)

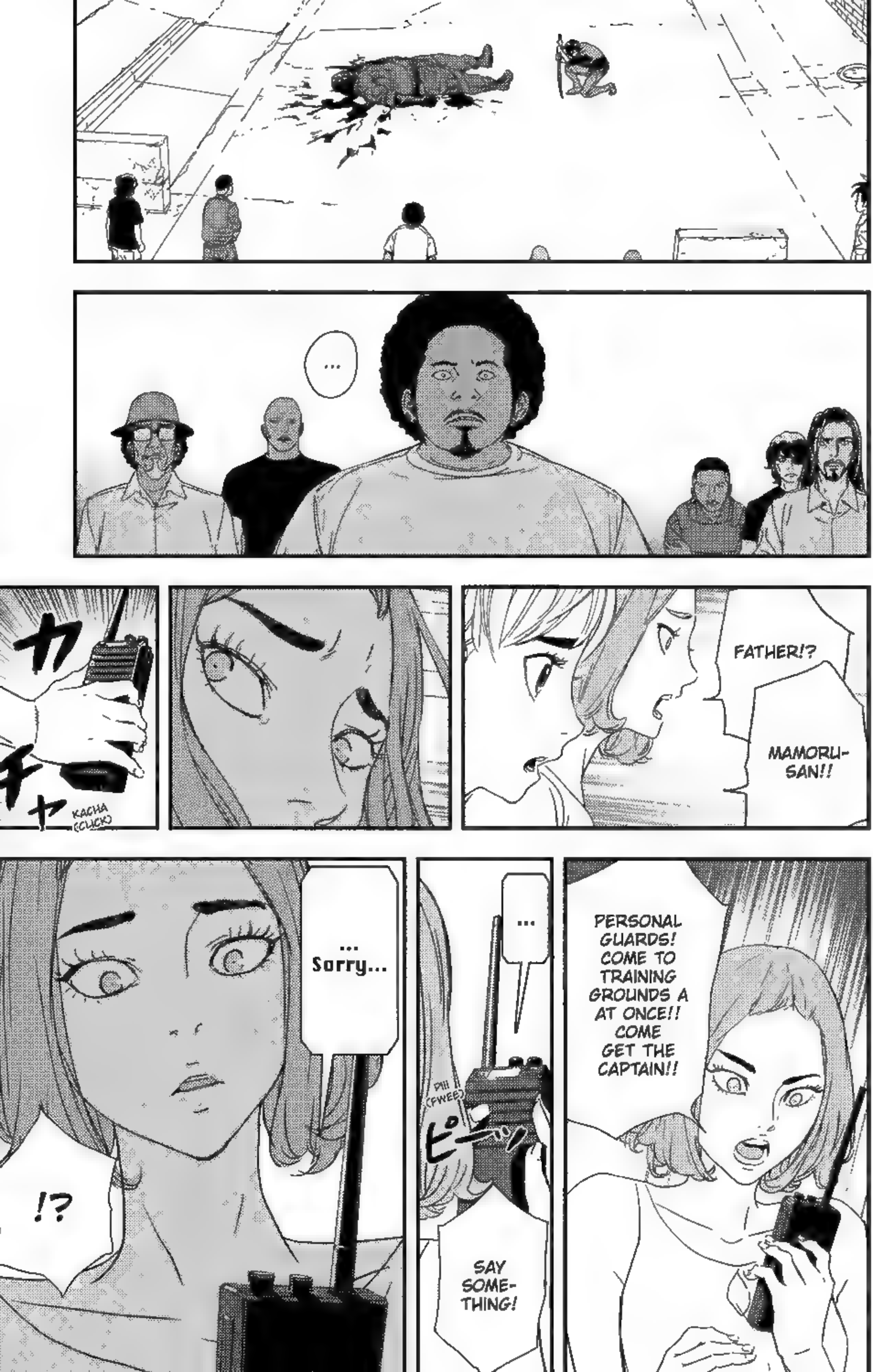

GASHU
(GSHK)

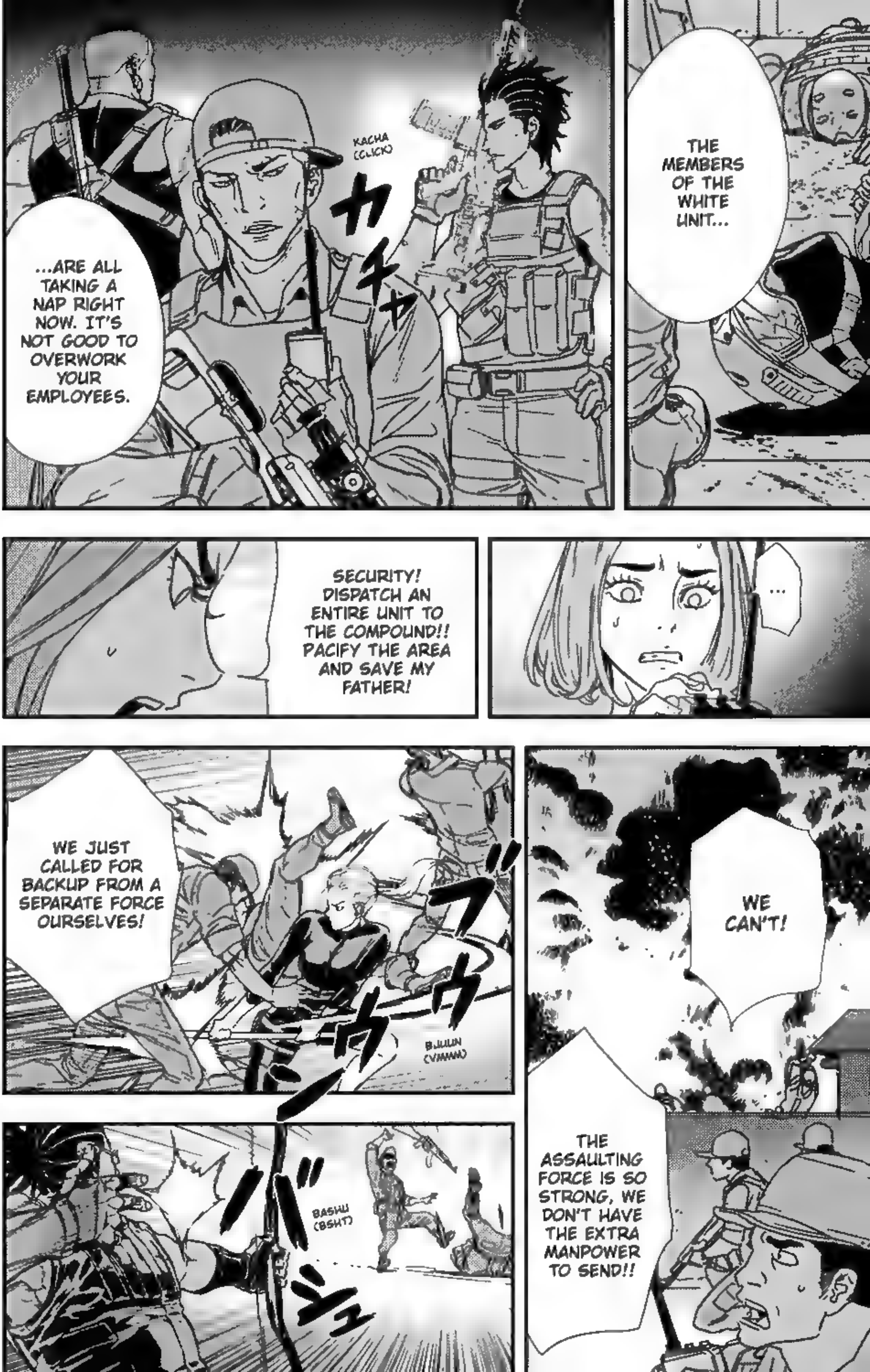

ガガガ
GAGAGA (GRAKK)
クッ
KU (HEH)
MAKABE ONE-SWORD STYLE... "SHIGURE" ...
グウオオオ
GUUOOO (GRAAAH)

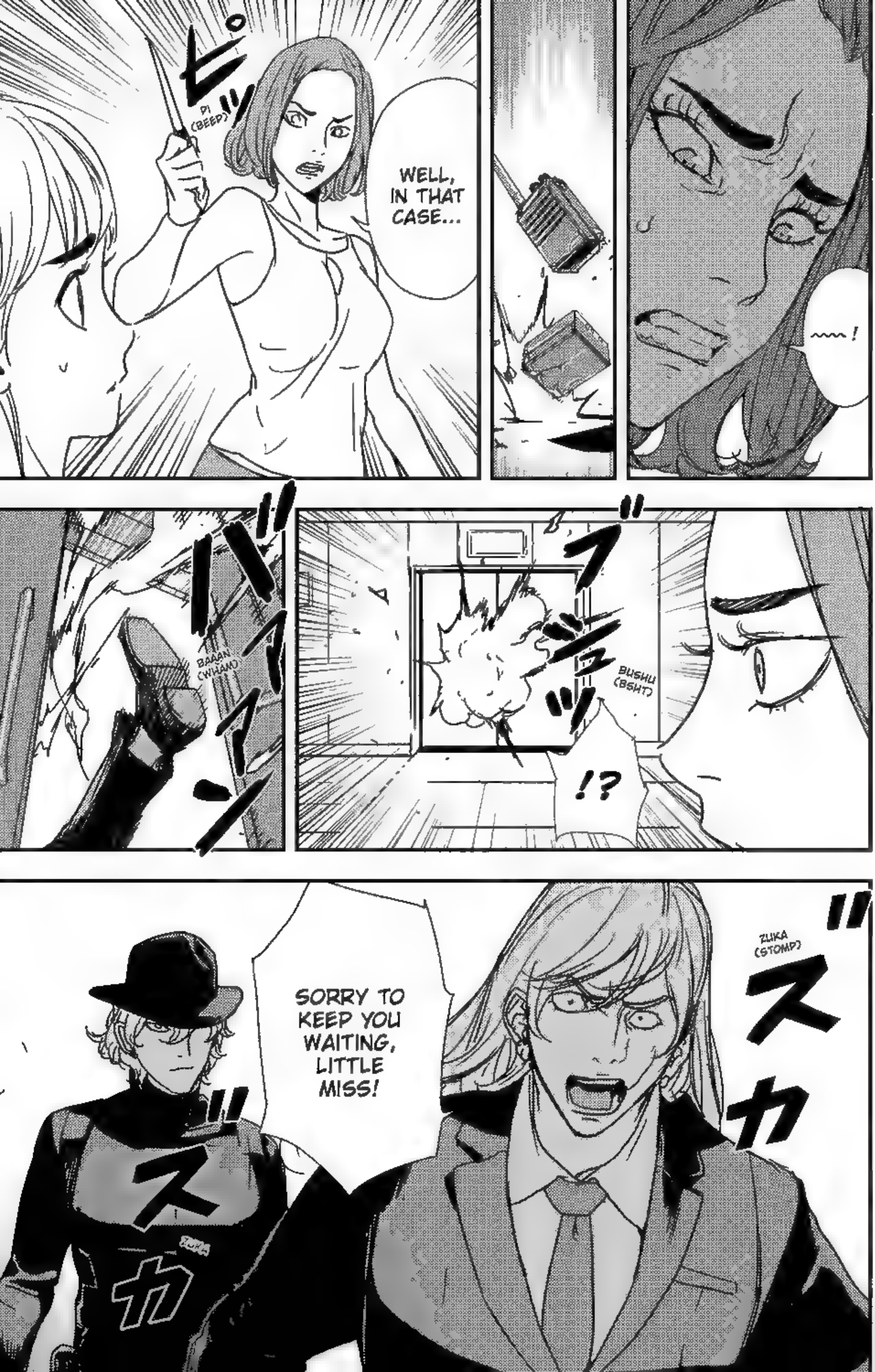

GAGAGA (GRAKK)
KU (CHEW)
MAKABE ONE-SWORD STYLE... "SHIGURE" ...

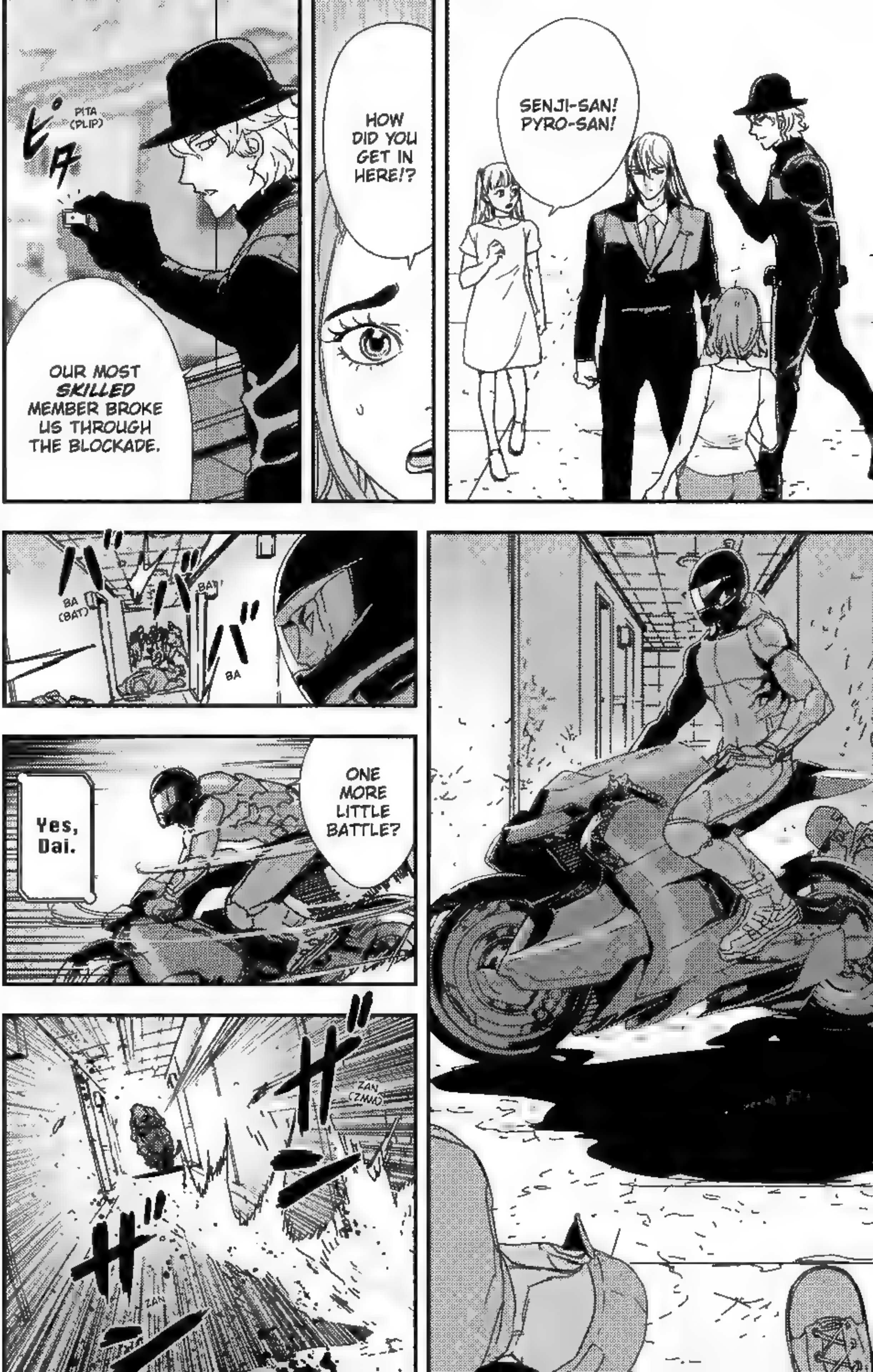
グォオオ
GUUOOO
(GRAAAO

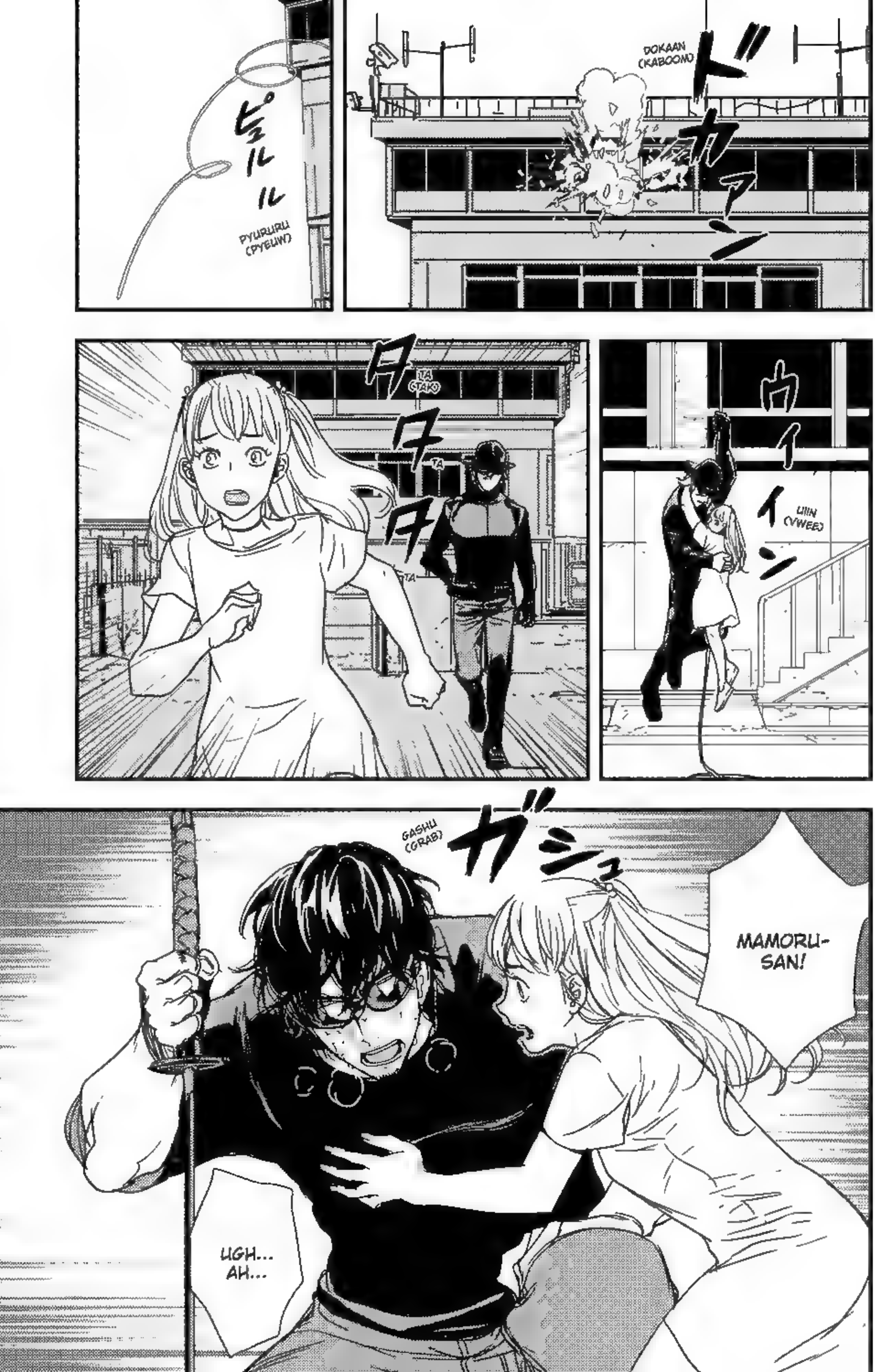

ズドンッ
ガクッ
ハァ
ハァ
カタ

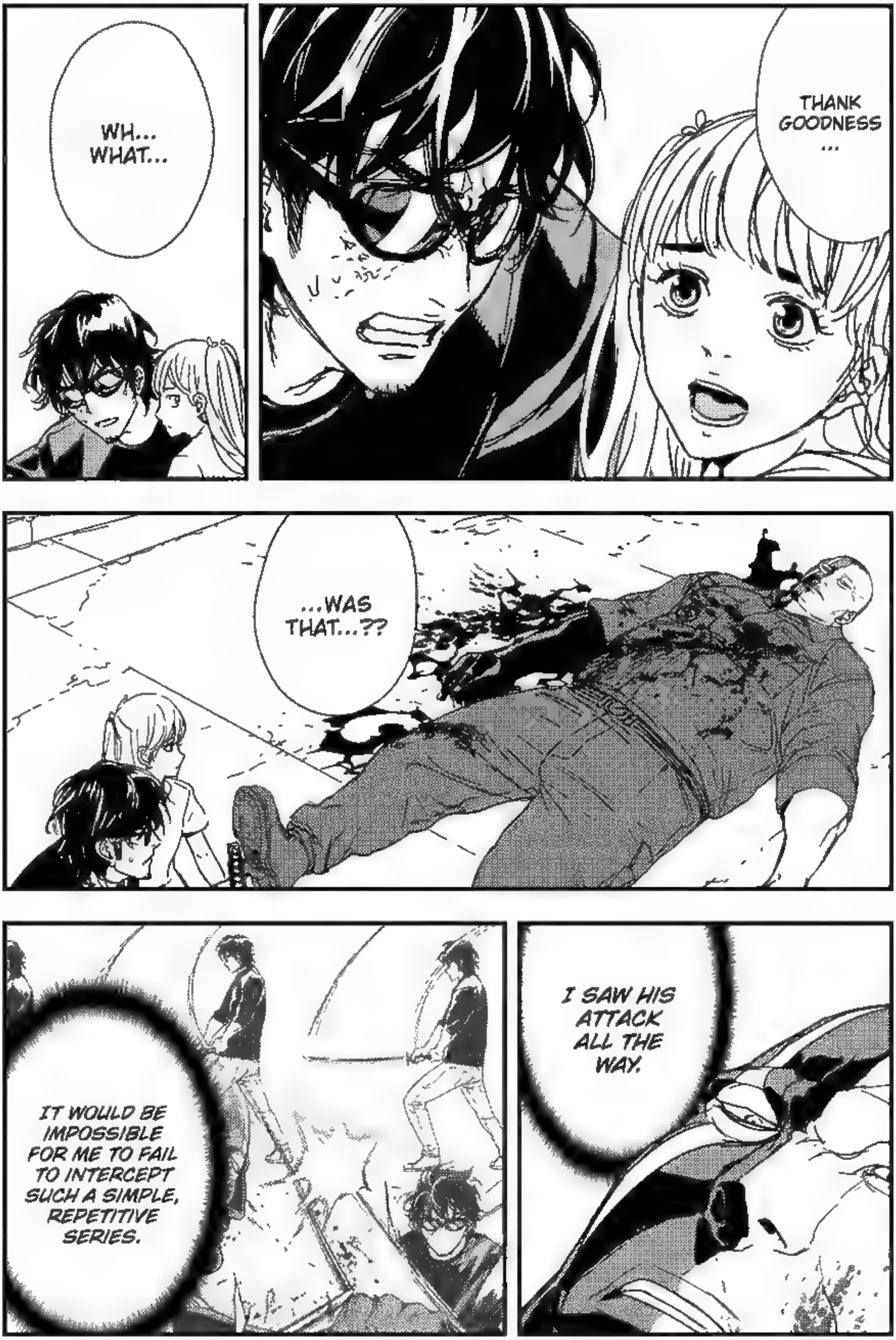

...
FATHER!?
MAMORU-SAN!!
カチャ
KACHA (CLICK)
PERSONAL GUARDS! COME TO TRAINING GROUNDS A AT ONCE!! COME GET THE CAPTAIN!!
...
ピー
PIII (FWEE)
SAY SOME-THING!
... Sorry...
!?

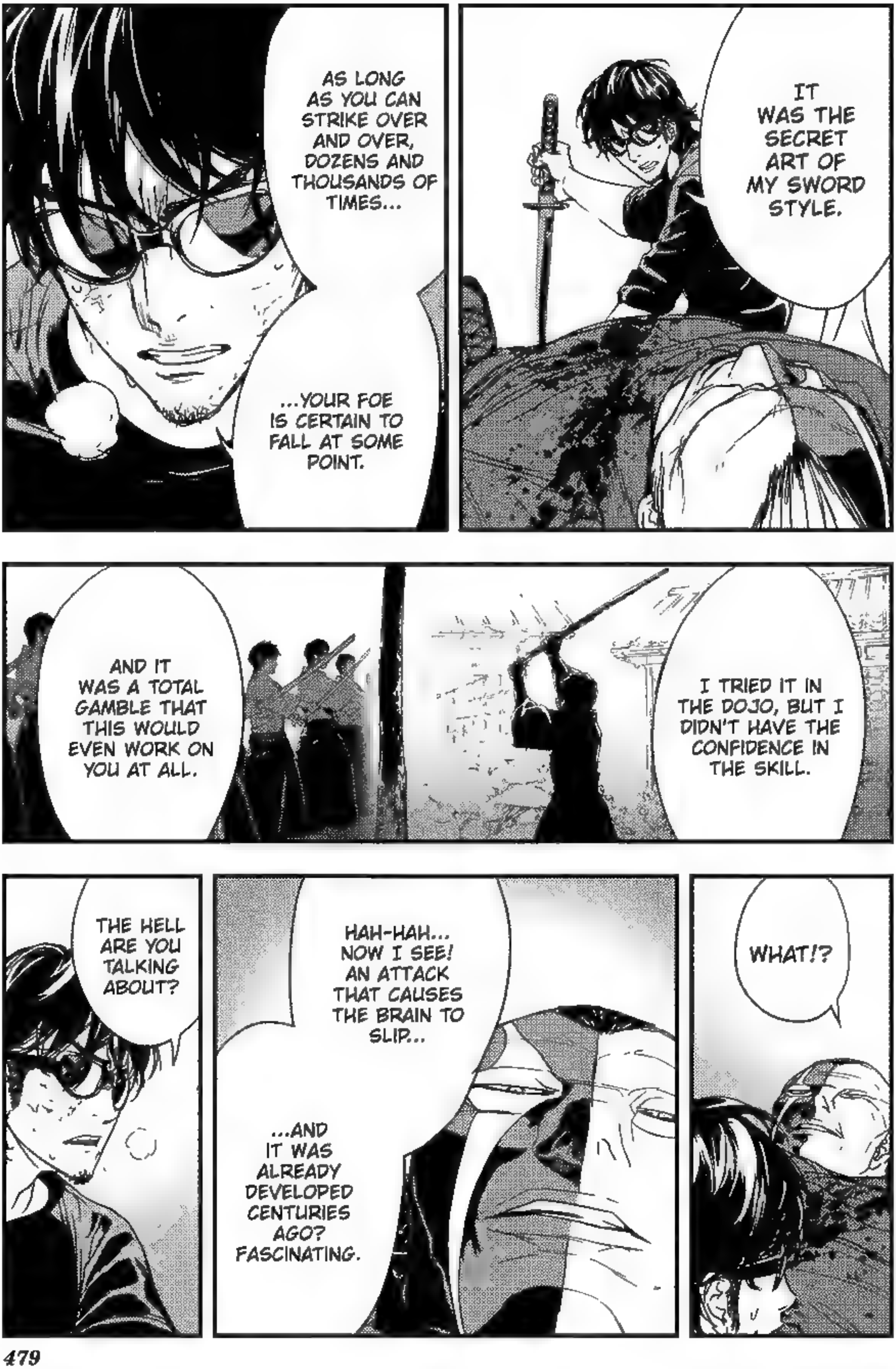

THE MEMBERS OF THE WHITE UNIT...
カチャ
KACHA (CLICK)
...ARE ALL TAKING A NAP RIGHT NOW. IT'S NOT GOOD TO OVERWORK YOUR EMPLOYEES.
...
SECURITY! DISPATCH AN ENTIRE UNIT TO THE COMPOUND!! PACIFY THE AREA AND SAVE MY FATHER!
WE CAN'T!
WE JUST CALLED FOR BACKUP FROM A SEPARATE FORCE OURSELVES!
ブウゥン
BJUUN (VMMM)
バシュ
BASHU (BSHT)
THE ASSAULTING FORCE IS SO STRONG, WE DON'T HAVE THE EXTRA MANPOWER TO SEND!!

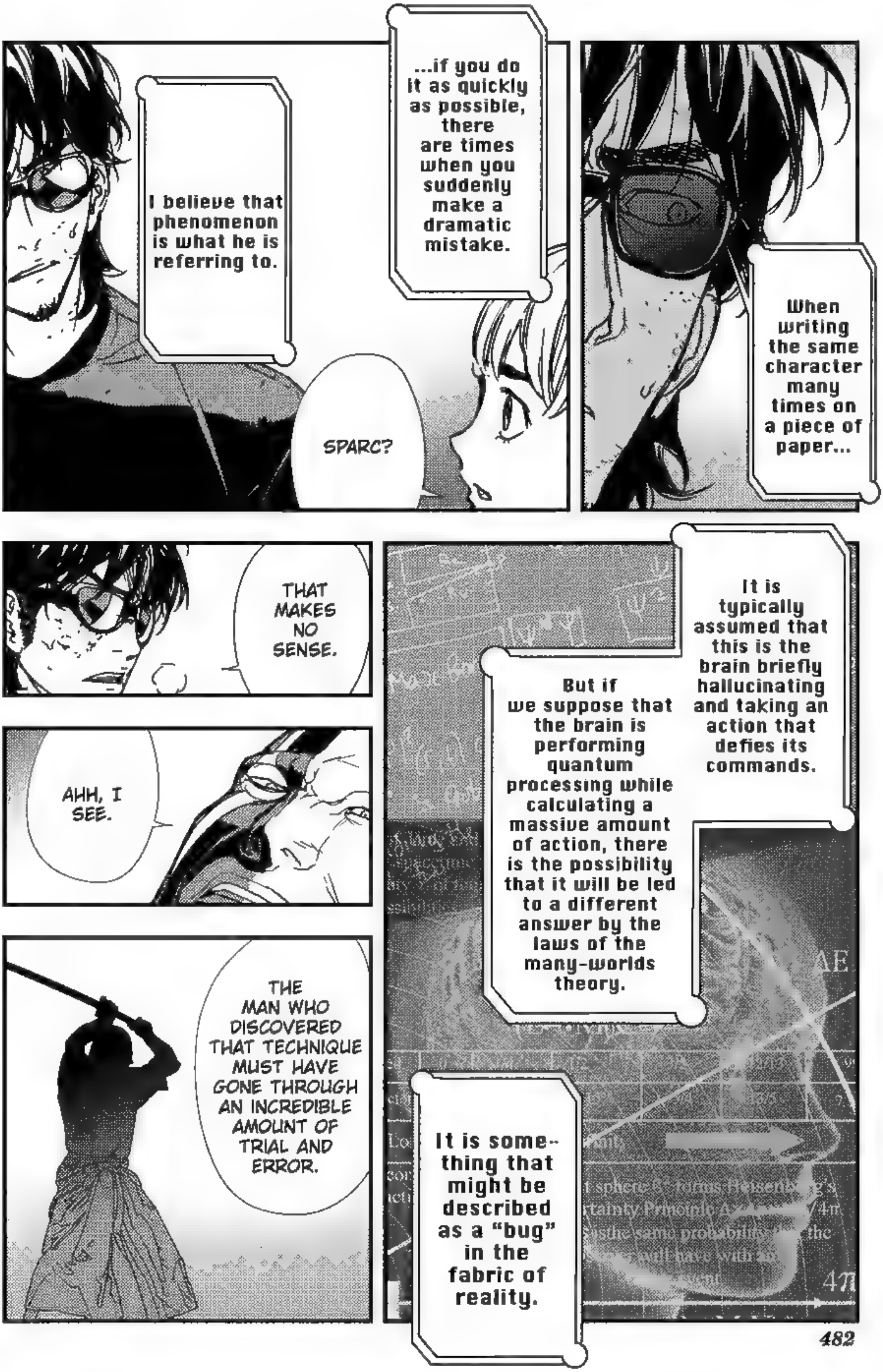

ピッ
PI (BEEP)
WELL, IN THAT CASE...
～～～!
バァァン
BAAAN (WHAM)
ブシュッ
BUSHU (BSHT)
!?
ズカ
ZUKA (STOMP)
SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING, LITTLE MISS!
ズカ
ZUKA

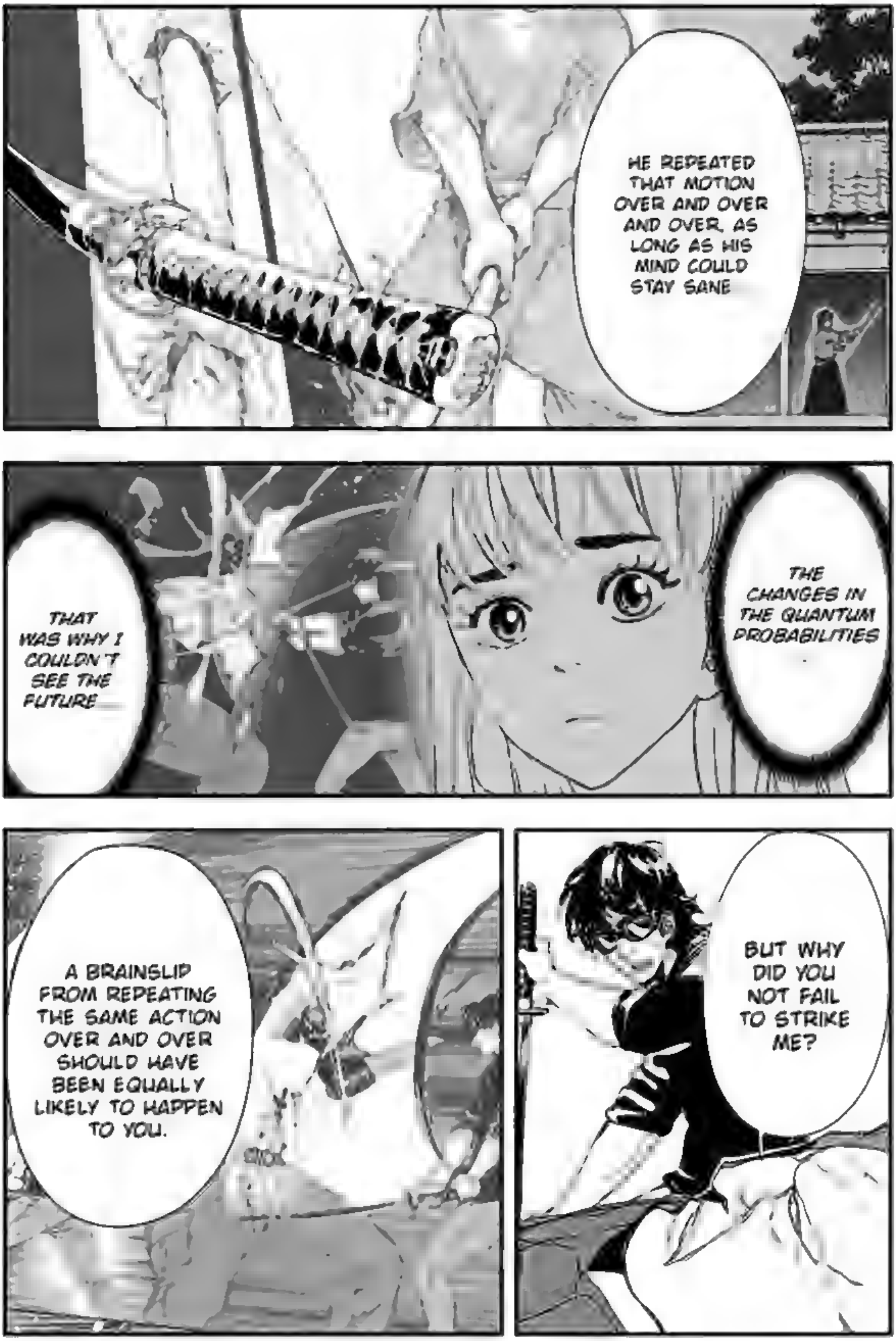

SENJI-SAN! PYRO-SAN!
HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE!?
ピタ
PITA (PLIP)
OUR MOST SKILLED MEMBER BROKE US THROUGH THE BLOCKADE.
バババ
BAT
BA (BAT)
BA
ONE MORE LITTLE BATTLE?
Yes, Dai.
ザザ
ZAN (ZMA)
ZAN

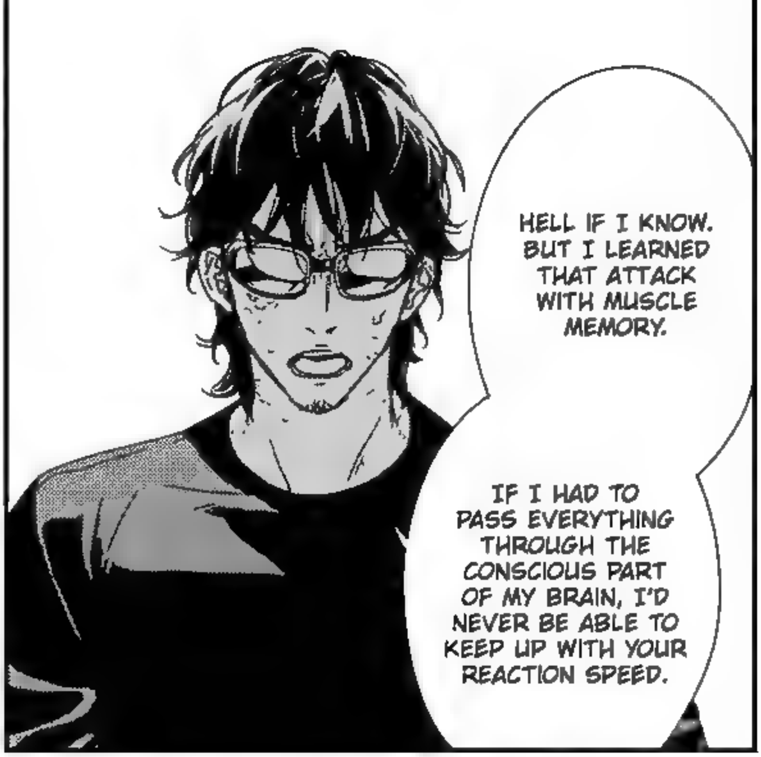

ドカァーン
DOKAAN (KABOOM)
ピュルル ル
PYURURU (PYEUW)
ウイイン
UIIN (VWEE)
タ
TA (TAK)
タ
TA
タ
TA
ガシュ
GASHU (GRAB)
MAMORU-SAN!
UGH... AH...

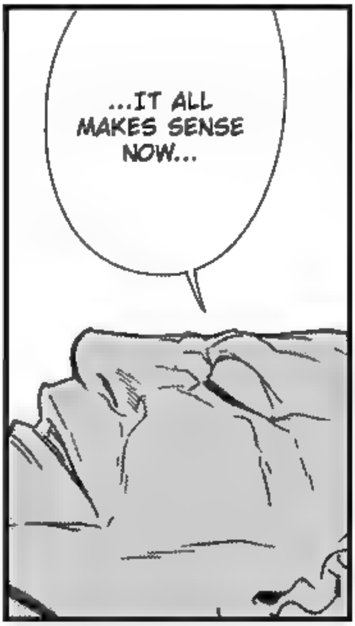

THANK GOODNESS ...
WH... WHAT...
...WAS THAT...??
I SAW HIS ATTACK ALL THE WAY.
IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO FAIL TO INTERCEPT SUCH A SIMPLE, REPETITIVE SERIES.

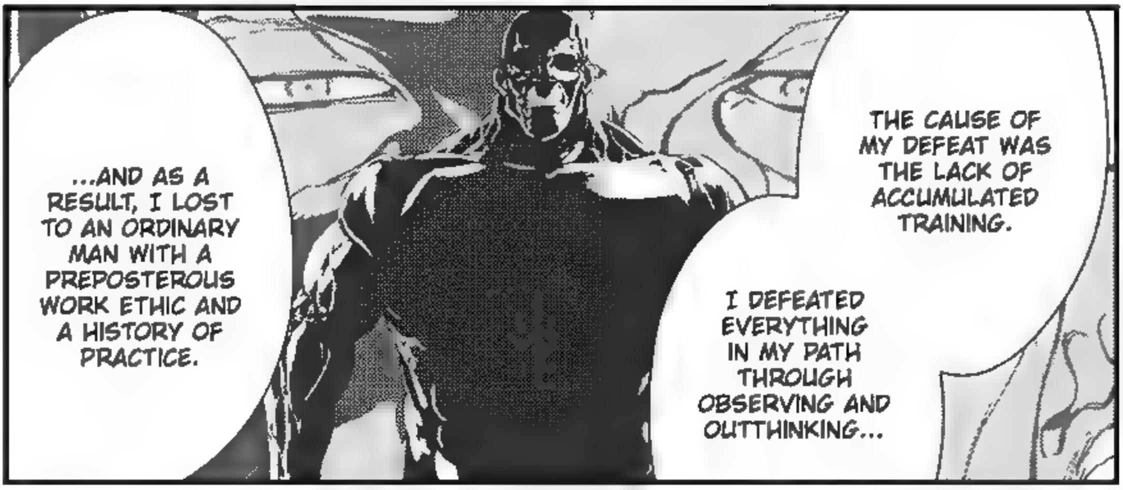

IT WAS THE SECRET ART OF MY SWORD STYLE.
AS LONG AS YOU CAN STRIKE OVER AND OVER, DOZENS AND THOUSANDS OF TIMES...
...YOUR FOE IS CERTAIN TO FALL AT SOME POINT.
I TRIED IT IN THE DOJO, BUT I DIDN'T HAVE THE CONFIDENCE IN THE SKILL.
AND IT WAS A TOTAL GAMBLE THAT THIS WOULD EVEN WORK ON YOU AT ALL.
WHAT!?
HAH-HAH... NOW I SEE! AN ATTACK THAT CAUSES THE BRAIN TO SLIP...
...AND IT WAS ALREADY DEVELOPED CENTURIES AGO? FASCINATING.
THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

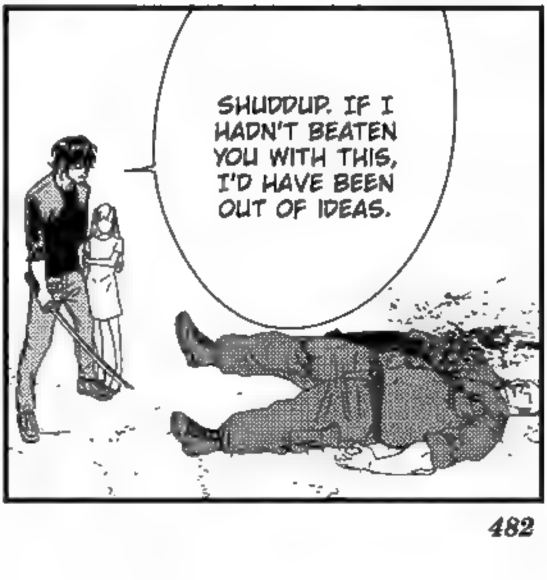

When writing the same character many times on a piece of paper...
...if you do it as quickly as possible, there are times when you suddenly make a dramatic mistake.
SPARC?
I believe that phenomenon is what he is referring to.
It is typically assumed that this is the brain briefly hallucinating and taking an action that defies its commands.
But if we suppose that the brain is performing quantum processing while calculating a massive amount of action, there is the possibility that it will be led to a different answer by the laws of the many-worlds theory.
It is something that might be described as a "bug" in the fabric of reality.
THAT MAKES NO SENSE.
AHH, I SEE.
THE MAN WHO DISCOVERED THAT TECHNIQUE MUST HAVE GONE THROUGH AN INCREDIBLE AMOUNT OF TRIAL AND ERROR.

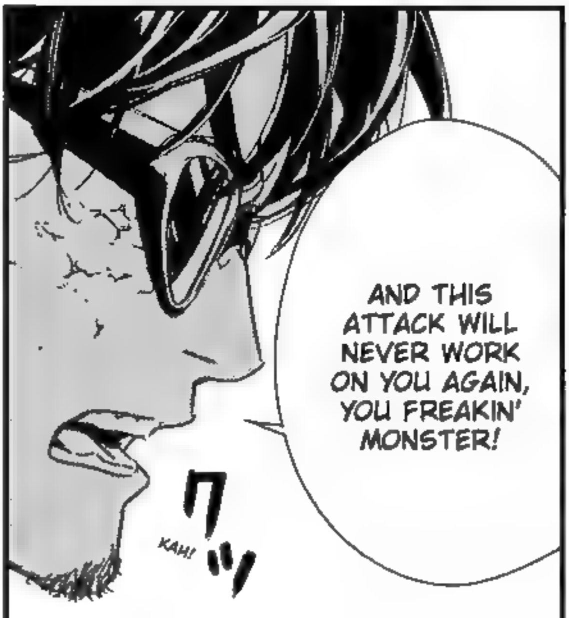

HE REPEATED THAT MOTION OVER AND OVER AND OVER, AS LONG AS HIS MIND COULD STAY SANE
THE CHANGES IN THE QUANTUM PROBABILITIES
THAT WAS WHY I COULDN'T SEE THE FUTURE...
BUT WHY DID YOU NOT FAIL TO STRIKE ME?
A BRAINSLIP FROM REPEATING THE SAME ACTION OVER AND OVER SHOULD HAVE BEEN EQUALLY LIKELY TO HAPPEN TO YOU.

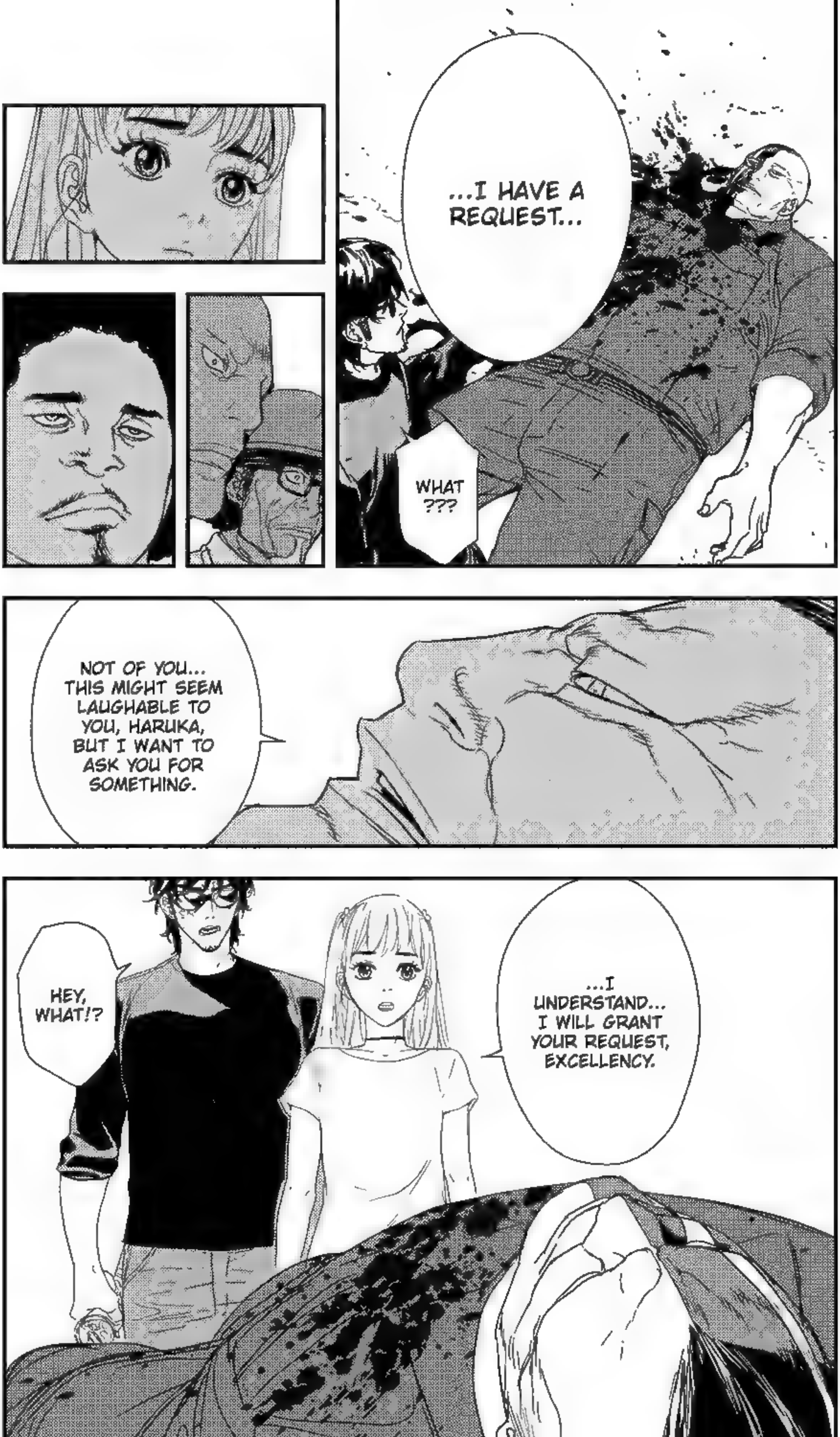

HELL IF I KNOW. BUT I LEARNED THAT ATTACK WITH MUSCLE MEMORY.
IF I HAD TO PASS EVERYTHING THROUGH THE CONSCIOUS PART OF MY BRAIN, I'D NEVER BE ABLE TO KEEP UP WITH YOUR REACTION SPEED.

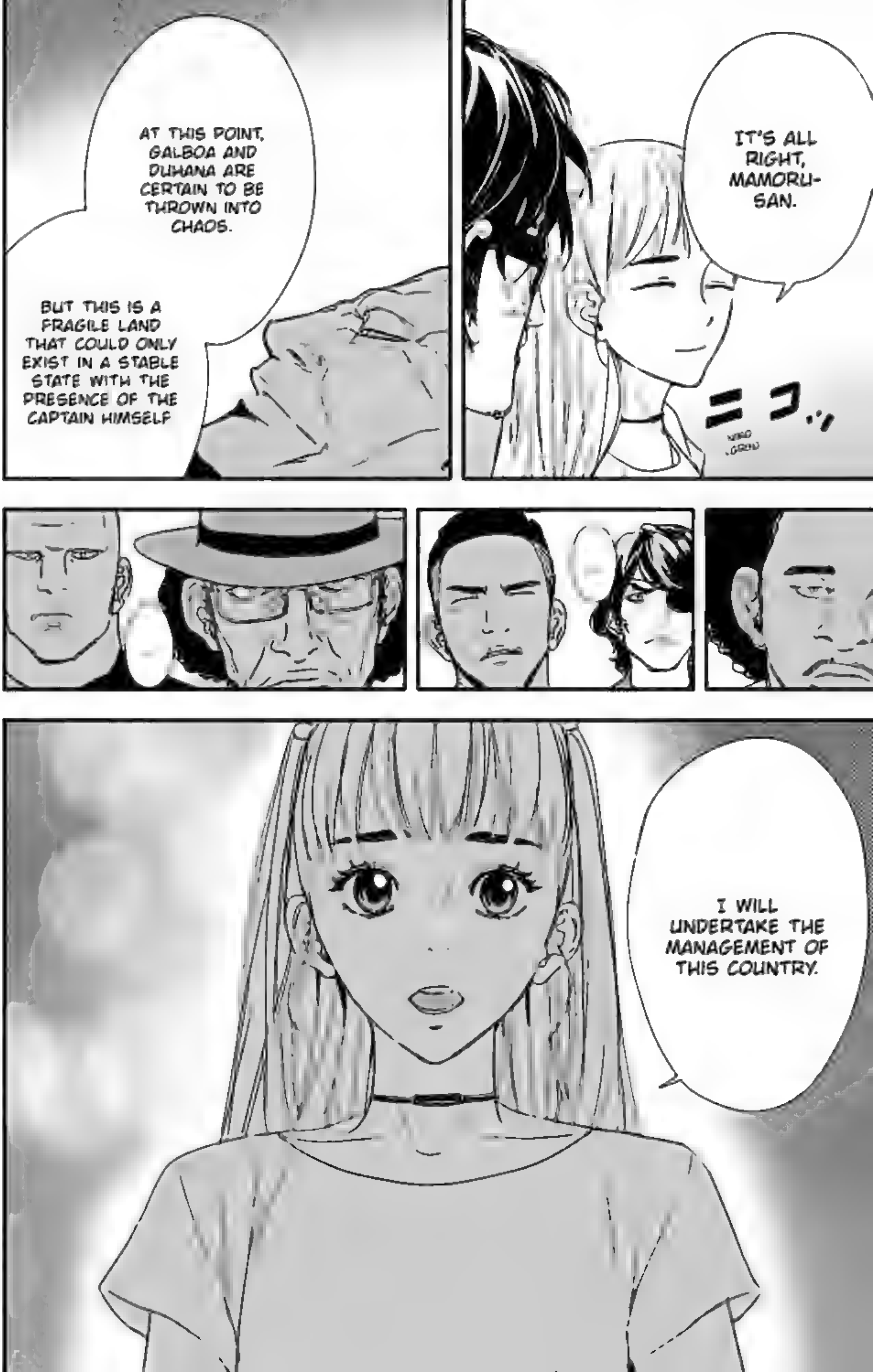

...IT ALL MAKES SENSE NOW...


THE CAUSE OF MY DEFEAT WAS THE LACK OF ACCUMULATED TRAINING.
I DEFEATED EVERYTHING IN MY PATH THROUGH OBSERVING AND OUTTHINKING...
...AND AS A RESULT, I LOST TO AN ORDINARY MAN WITH A PREPOSTEROUS WORK ETHIC AND A HISTORY OF PRACTICE.

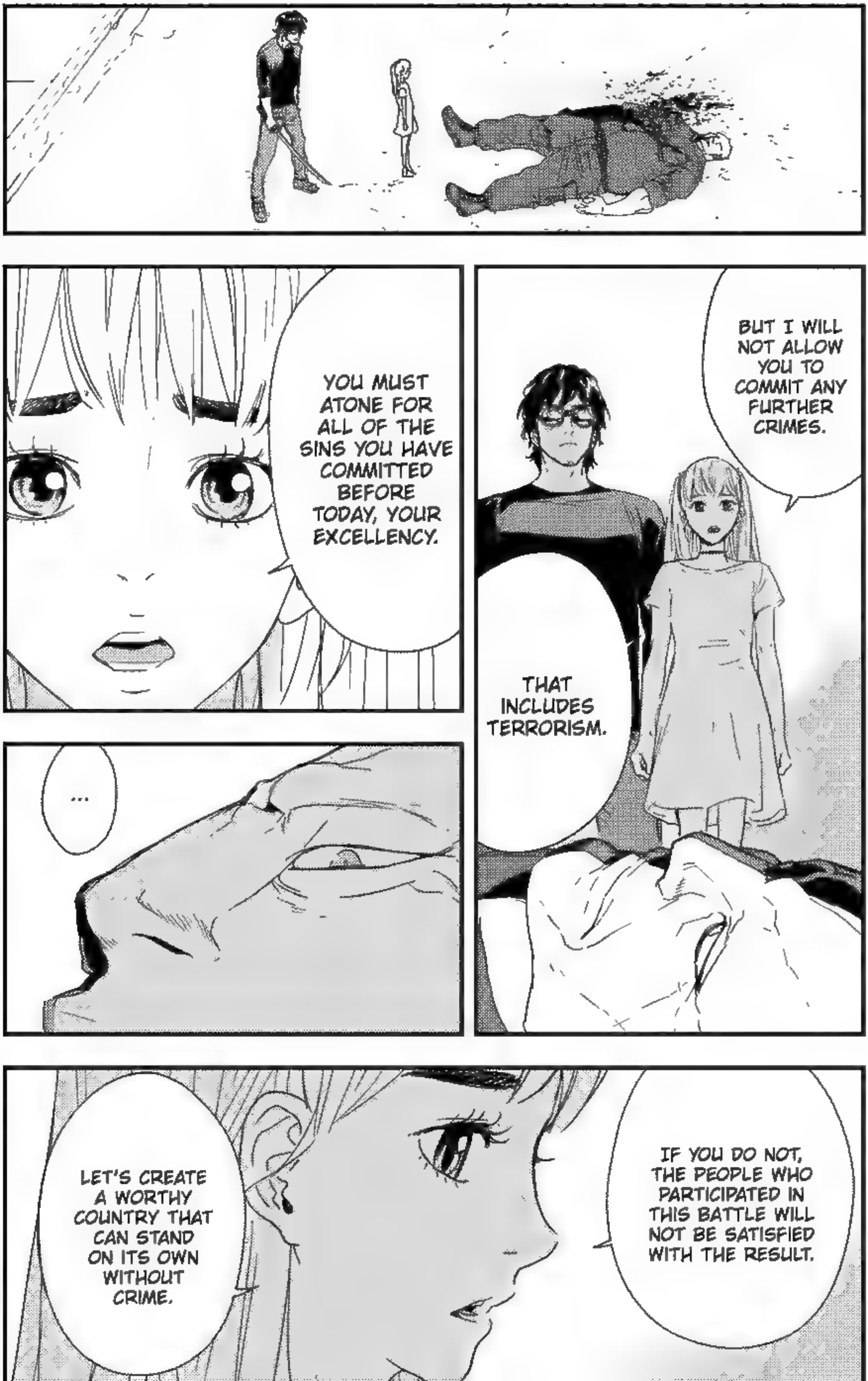

SHUDDUP. IF I HADN'T BEATEN YOU WITH THIS, I'D HAVE BEEN OUT OF IDEAS.

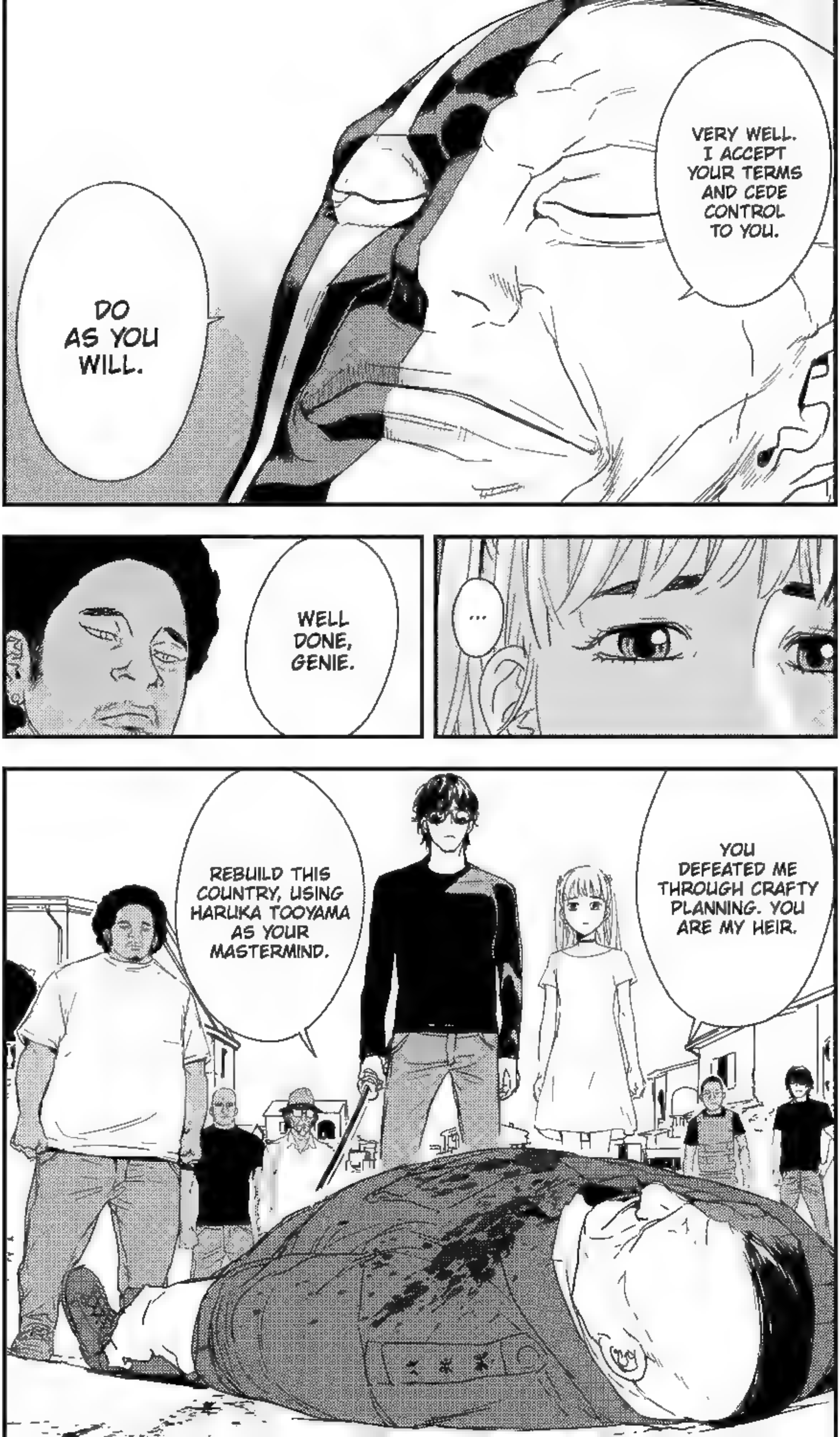

AND THIS ATTACK WILL NEVER WORK ON YOU AGAIN, YOU FREAKIN' MONSTER!
KAH!

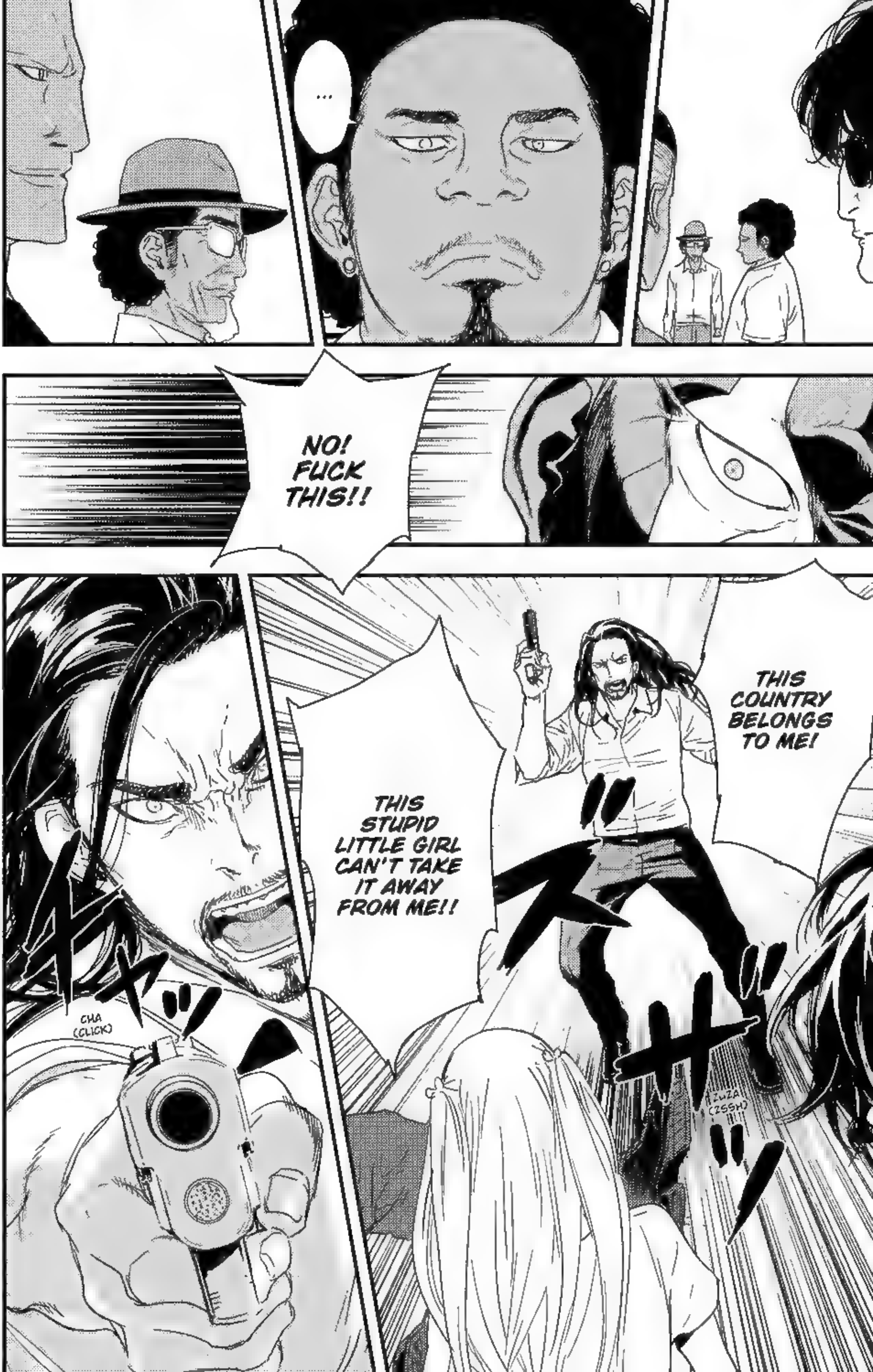

...I HAVE A REQUEST...
WHAT ???
NOT OF YOU... THIS MIGHT SEEM LAUGHABLE TO YOU, HARUKA, BUT I WANT TO ASK YOU FOR SOMETHING.
...I UNDERSTAND... I WILL GRANT YOUR REQUEST, EXCELLENCY.
HEY, WHAT!?

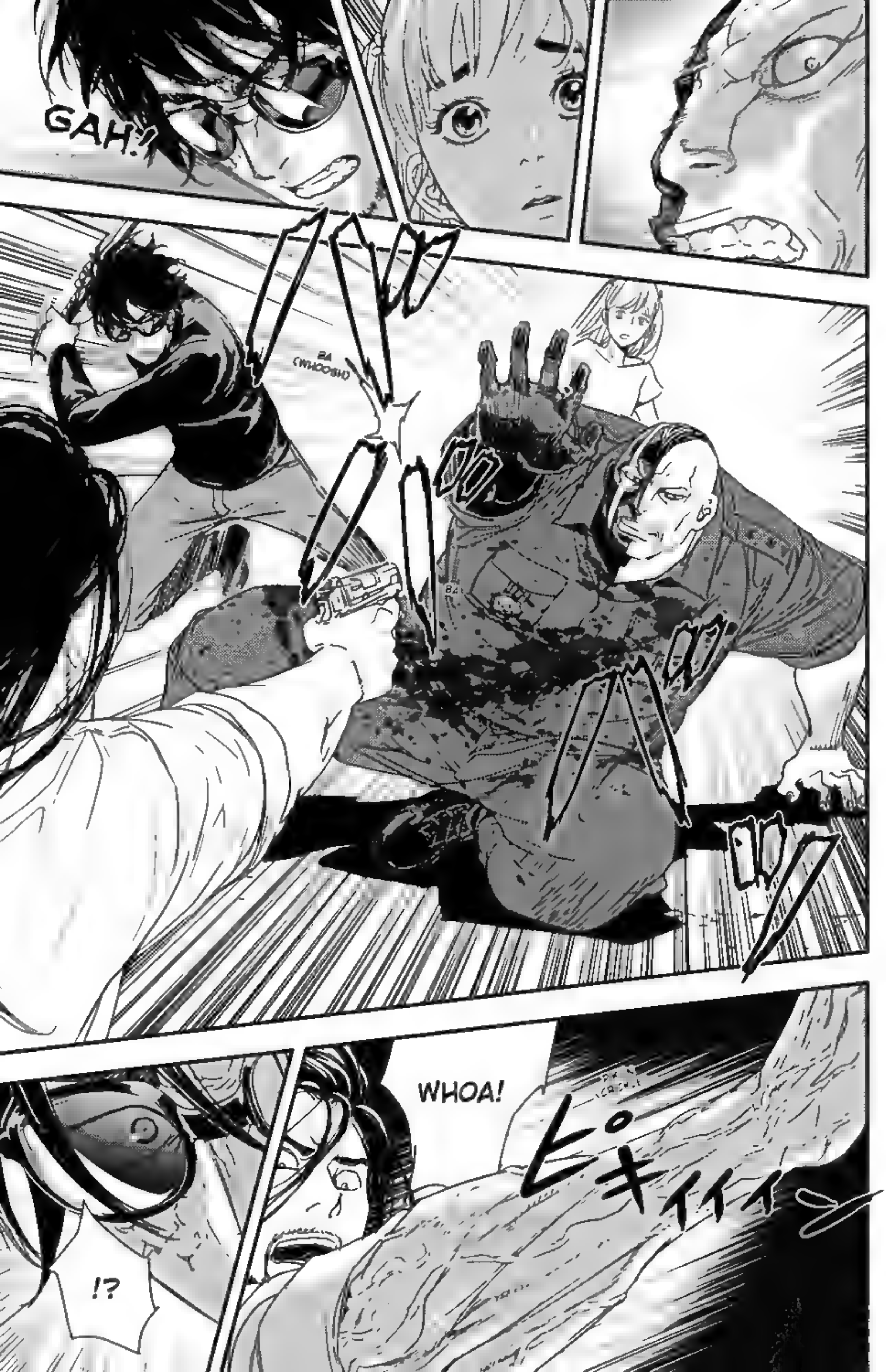

IT'S ALL RIGHT, MAMORU-SAN.
ニコッ
NIKO (GRIN)
AT THIS POINT, GALBOA AND DUHANA ARE CERTAIN TO BE THROWN INTO CHAOS.
BUT THIS IS A FRAGILE LAND THAT COULD ONLY EXIST IN A STABLE STATE WITH THE PRESENCE OF THE CAPTAIN HIMSELF
I WILL UNDERTAKE THE MANAGEMENT OF THIS COUNTRY.

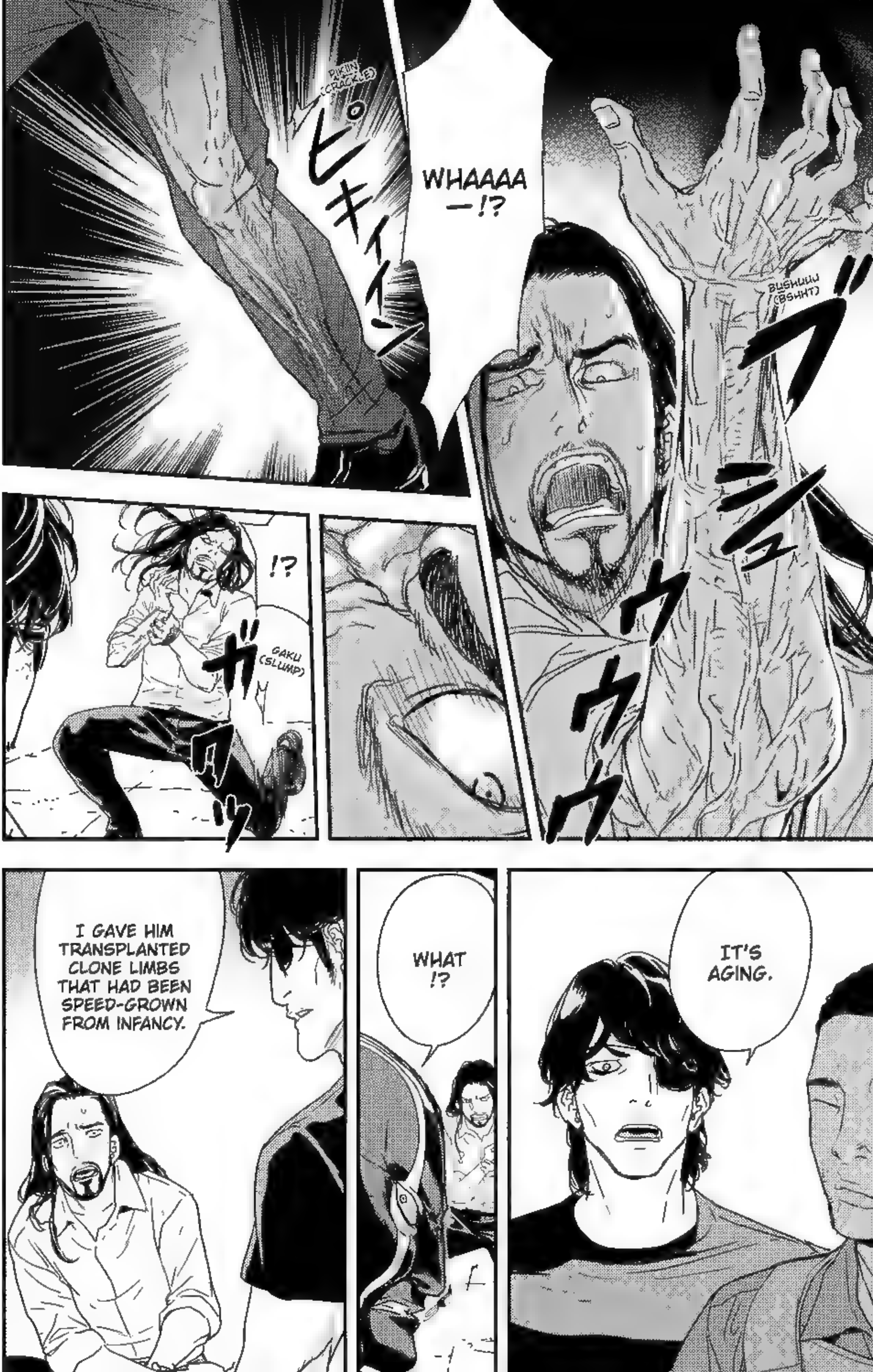
final chapter

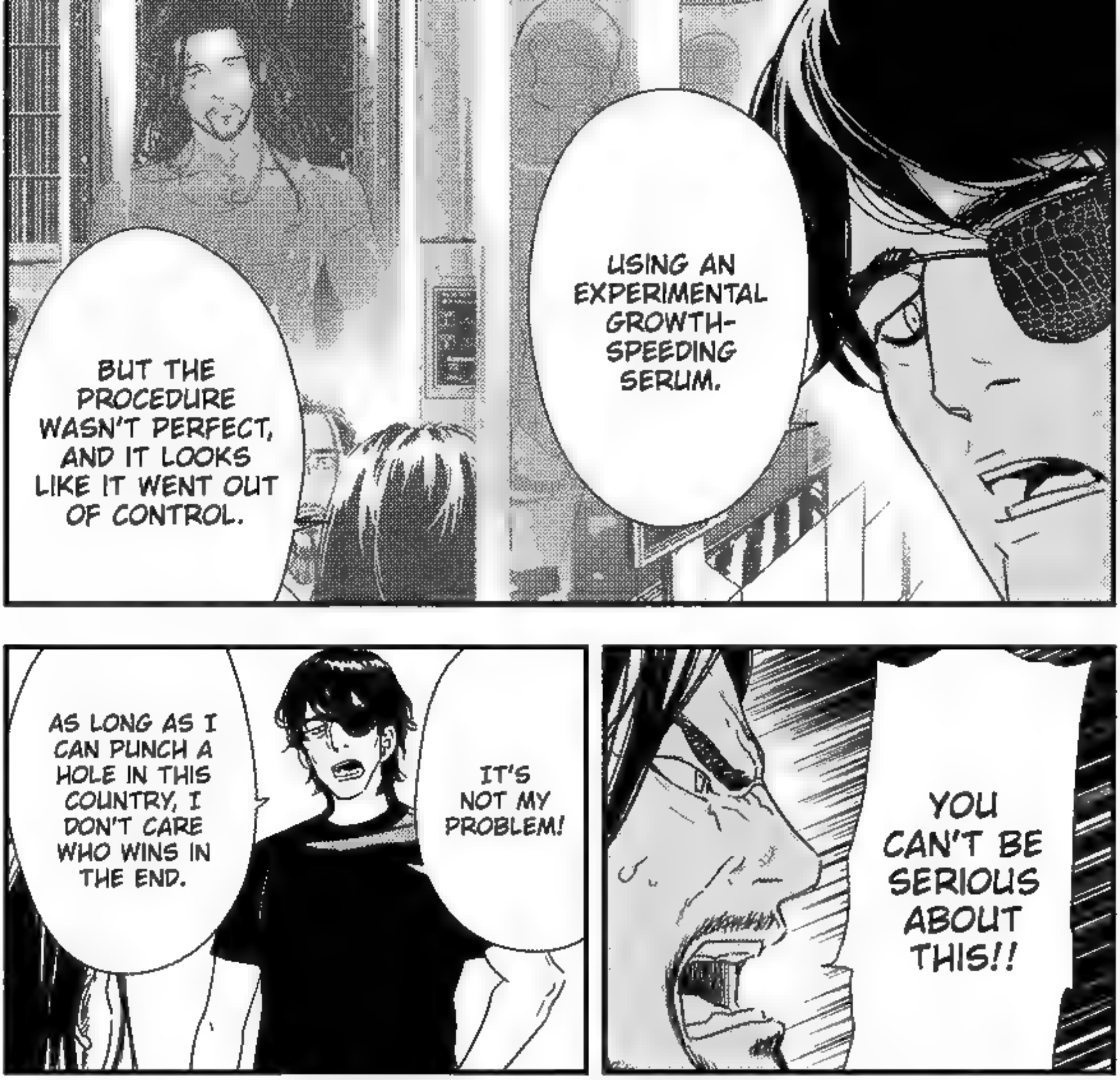

YOU MUST ATONE FOR ALL OF THE SINS YOU HAVE COMMITTED BEFORE TODAY, YOUR EXCELLENCY.
BUT I WILL NOT ALLOW YOU TO COMMIT ANY FURTHER CRIMES.
THAT INCLUDES TERRORISM.
...
IF YOU DO NOT, THE PEOPLE WHO PARTICIPATED IN THIS BATTLE WILL NOT BE SATISFIED WITH THE RESULT.
LET'S CREATE A WORTHY COUNTRY THAT CAN STAND ON ITS OWN WITHOUT CRIME.

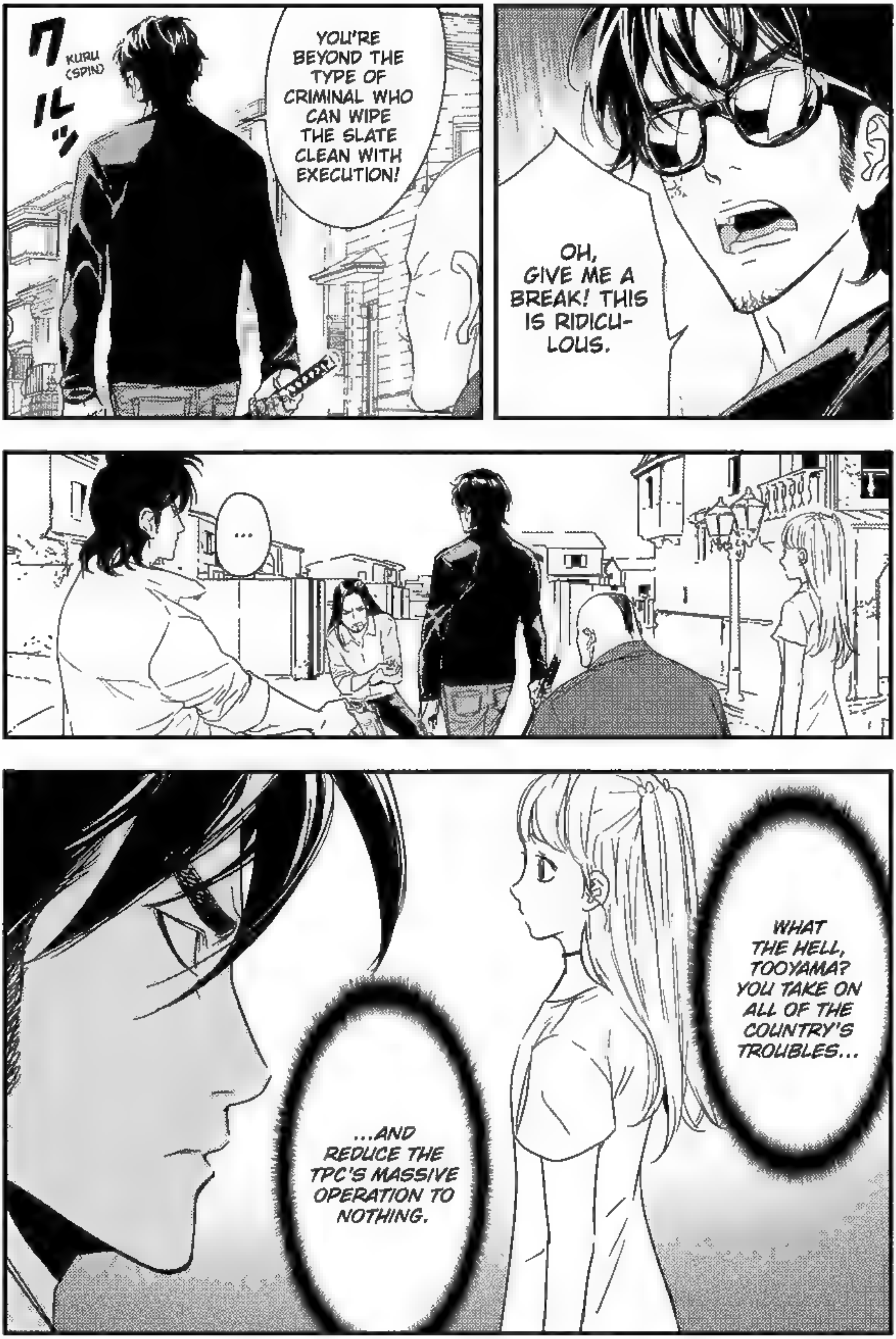

VERY WELL. I ACCEPT YOUR TERMS AND CEDE CONTROL TO YOU.
DO AS YOU WILL.
...
WELL DONE, GENIE.
YOU DEFEATED ME THROUGH CRAFTY PLANNING. YOU ARE MY HEIR.
REBUILD THIS COUNTRY, USING HARUKA TOOYAMA AS YOUR MASTERMIND.

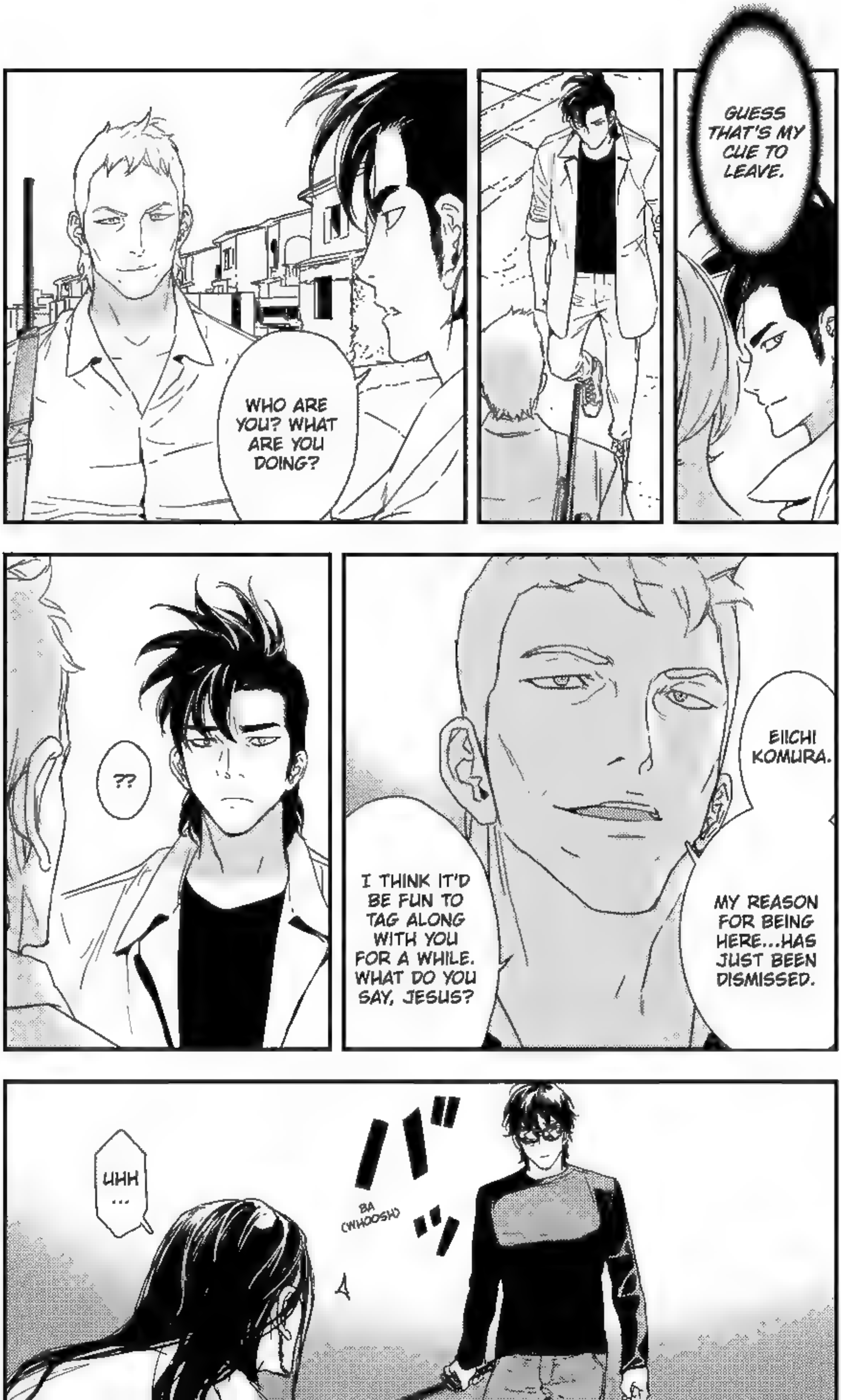

...
NO! FUCK THIS!!
THIS COUNTRY BELONGS TO ME!
THIS STUPID LITTLE GIRL CAN'T TAKE IT AWAY FROM ME!!
ZUZA (ZSSH)
CHA (CLICK)

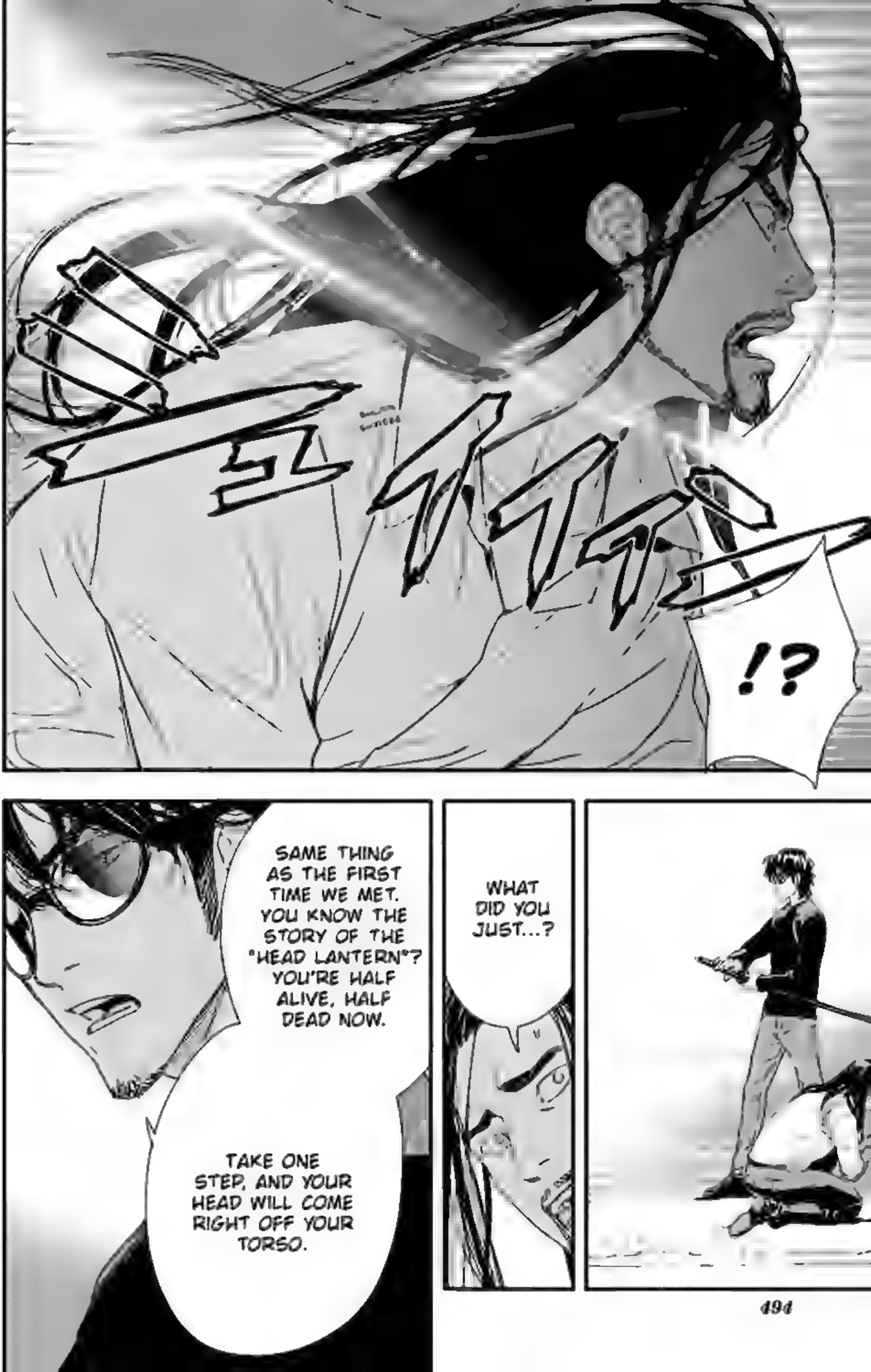

GAH!!
BA
(WHOOSH)
BA
WHOA!
ピキイイイ
!?

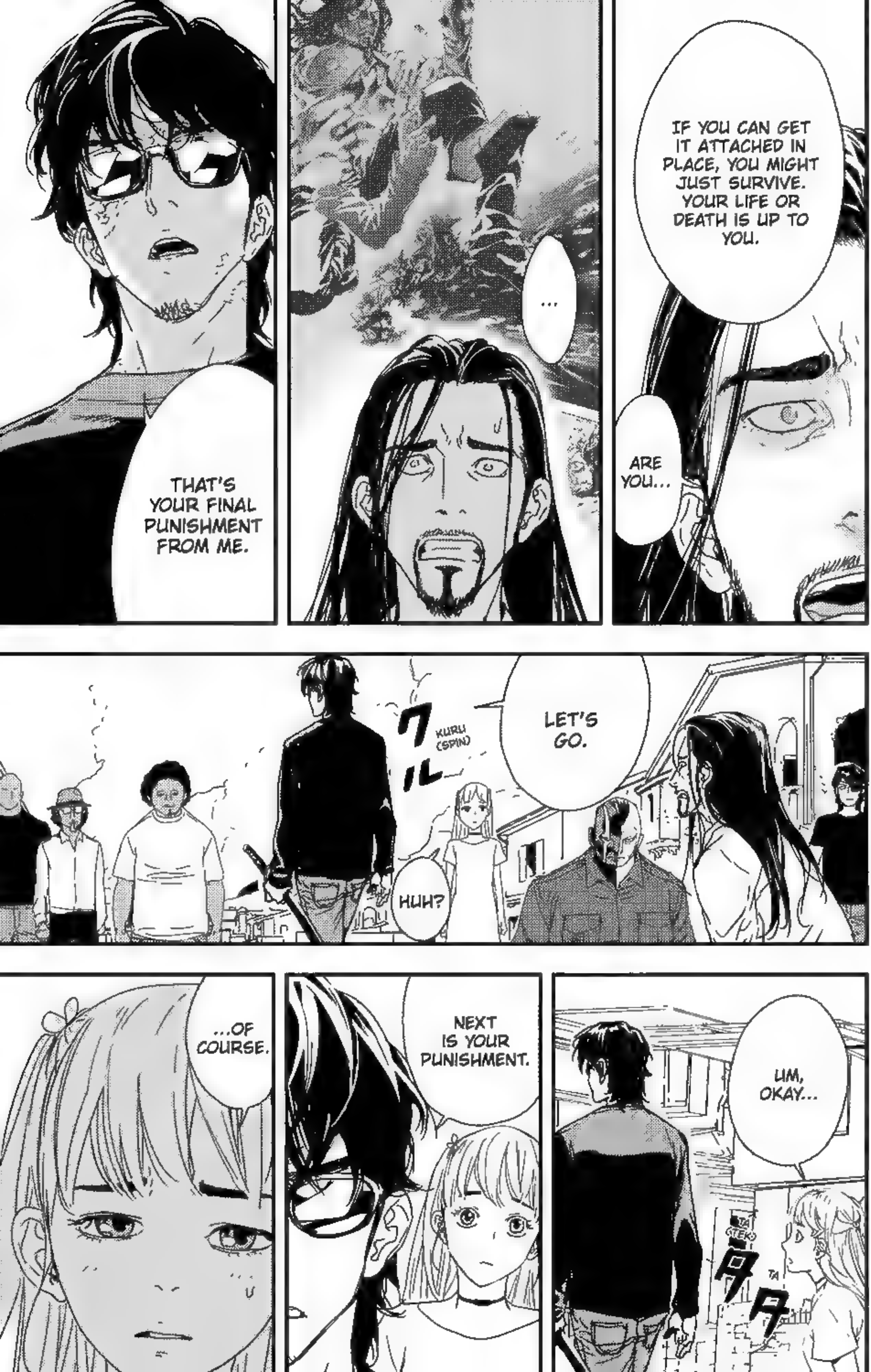

PIKIN (CRACKLE)
ピキィイン
WHAAAA—!?
BUSHUUU (BSHHT)
ブシュウウウ
!?
GAKU (SLUMP)
ガクッ
IT'S AGING.
WHAT!?
I GAVE HIM TRANSPLANTED CLONE LIMBS THAT HAD BEEN SPEED-GROWN FROM INFANCY.

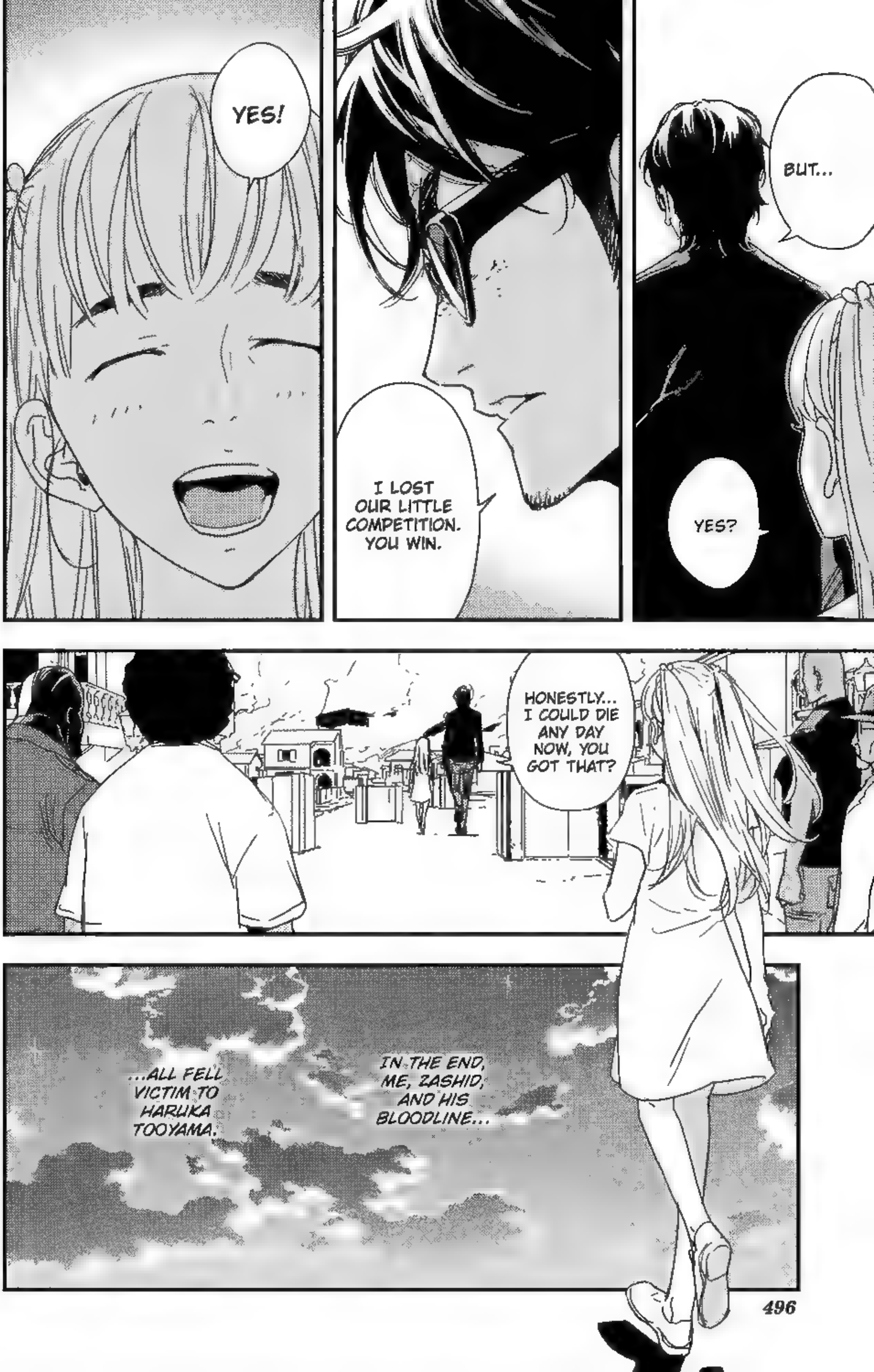

USING AN EXPERIMENTAL GROWTH-SPEEDING SERUM.
BUT THE PROCEDURE WASN'T PERFECT, AND IT LOOKS LIKE IT WENT OUT OF CONTROL.
YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS ABOUT THIS!!
IT'S NOT MY PROBLEM!
AS LONG AS I CAN PUNCH A HOLE IN THIS COUNTRY, I DON'T CARE WHO WINS IN THE END.
THAT'S IT, SAMURAI.
ZA (ZSH)
IT'S ALL DONE NOW. KILL ME.

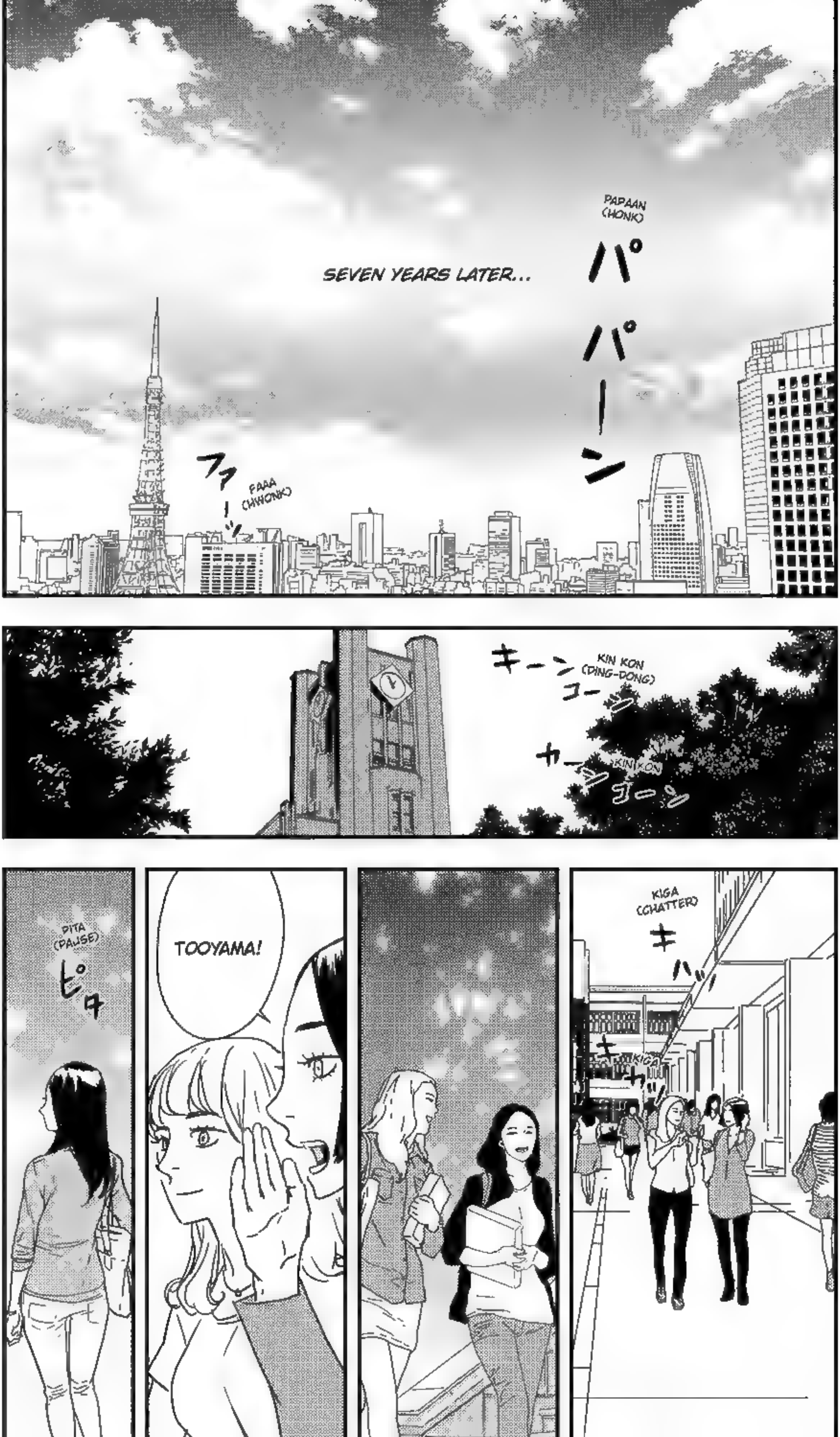

OH, GIVE ME A BREAK! THIS IS RIDICULOUS.
クルッ
KURU (SPIN)
YOU'RE BEYOND THE TYPE OF CRIMINAL WHO CAN WIPE THE SLATE CLEAN WITH EXECUTION!
...
WHAT THE HELL, TOOYAMA? YOU TAKE ON ALL OF THE COUNTRY'S TROUBLES...
...AND REDUCE THE TPC'S MASSIVE OPERATION TO NOTHING.

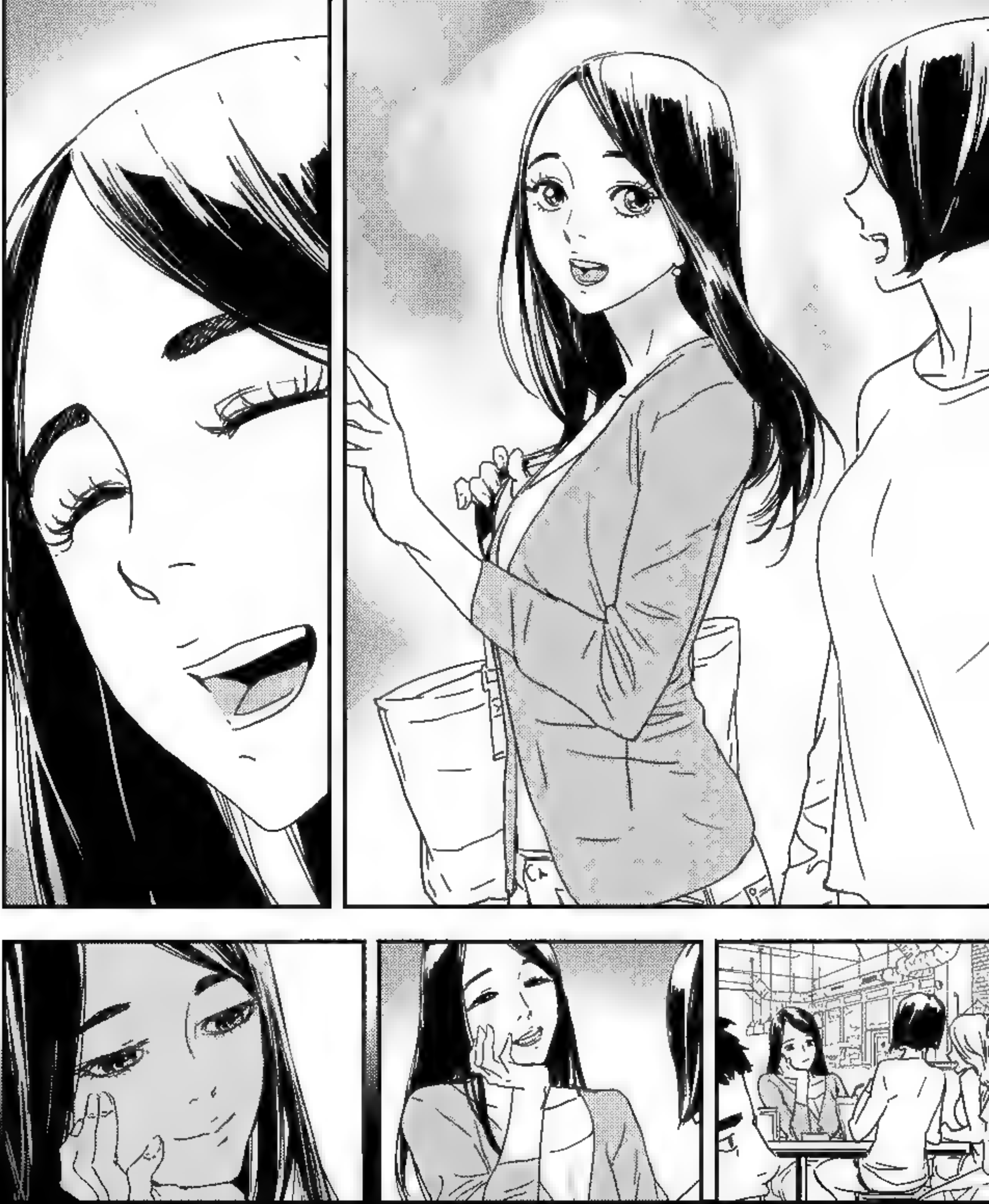

GUESS THAT'S MY CUE TO LEAVE.
WHO ARE YOU? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
EIICHI KOMURA.
MY REASON FOR BEING HERE...HAS JUST BEEN DISMISSED.
I THINK IT'D BE FUN TO TAG ALONG WITH YOU FOR A WHILE. WHAT DO YOU SAY, JESUS?
??
バッ
BA (WHOOSH)
UHH ...

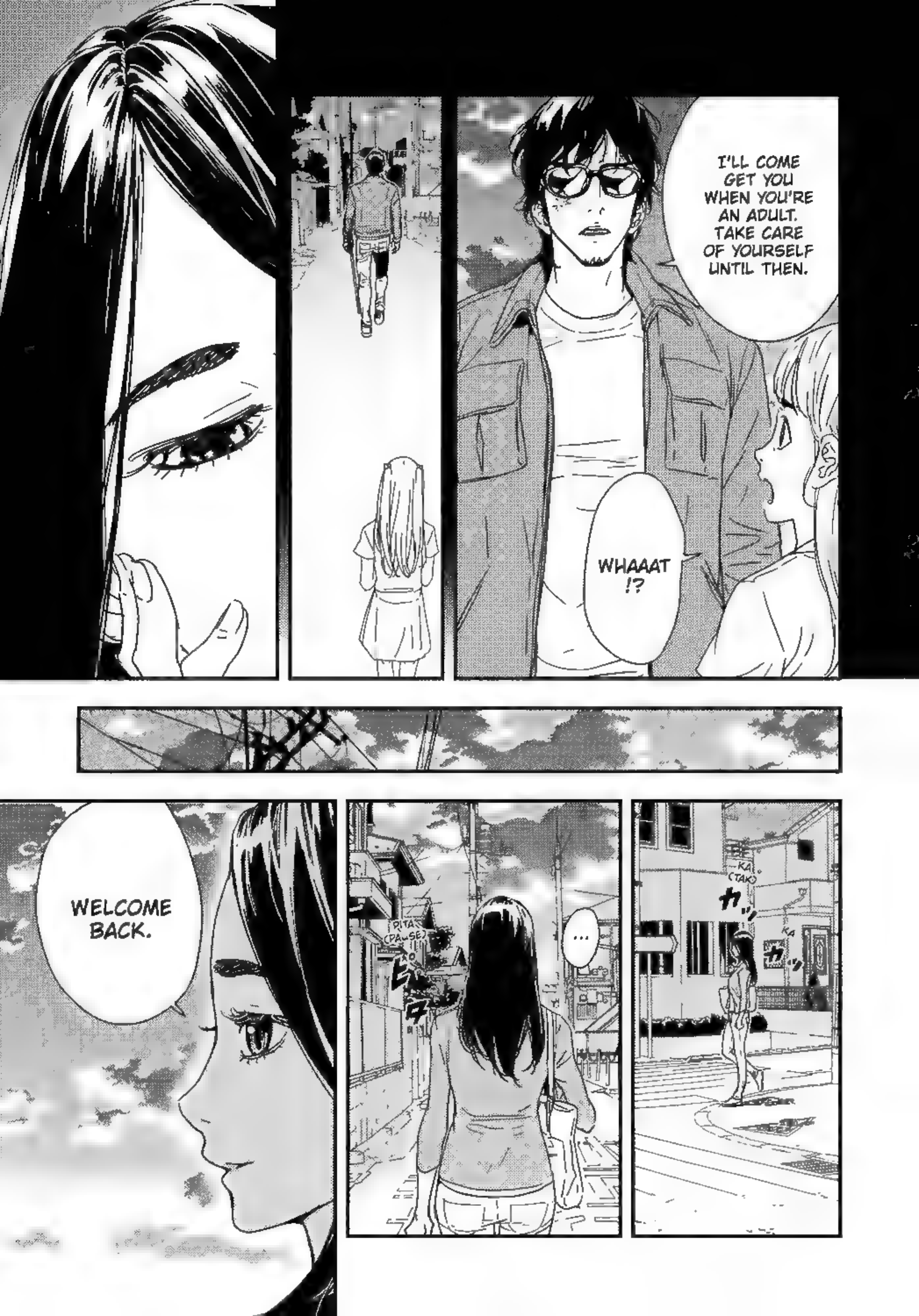

!?
WHAT DID YOU JUST...?
SAME THING AS THE FIRST TIME WE MET. YOU KNOW THE STORY OF THE "HEAD LANTERN"? YOU'RE HALF ALIVE, HALF DEAD NOW.
TAKE ONE STEP, AND YOUR HEAD WILL COME RIGHT OFF YOUR TORSO.

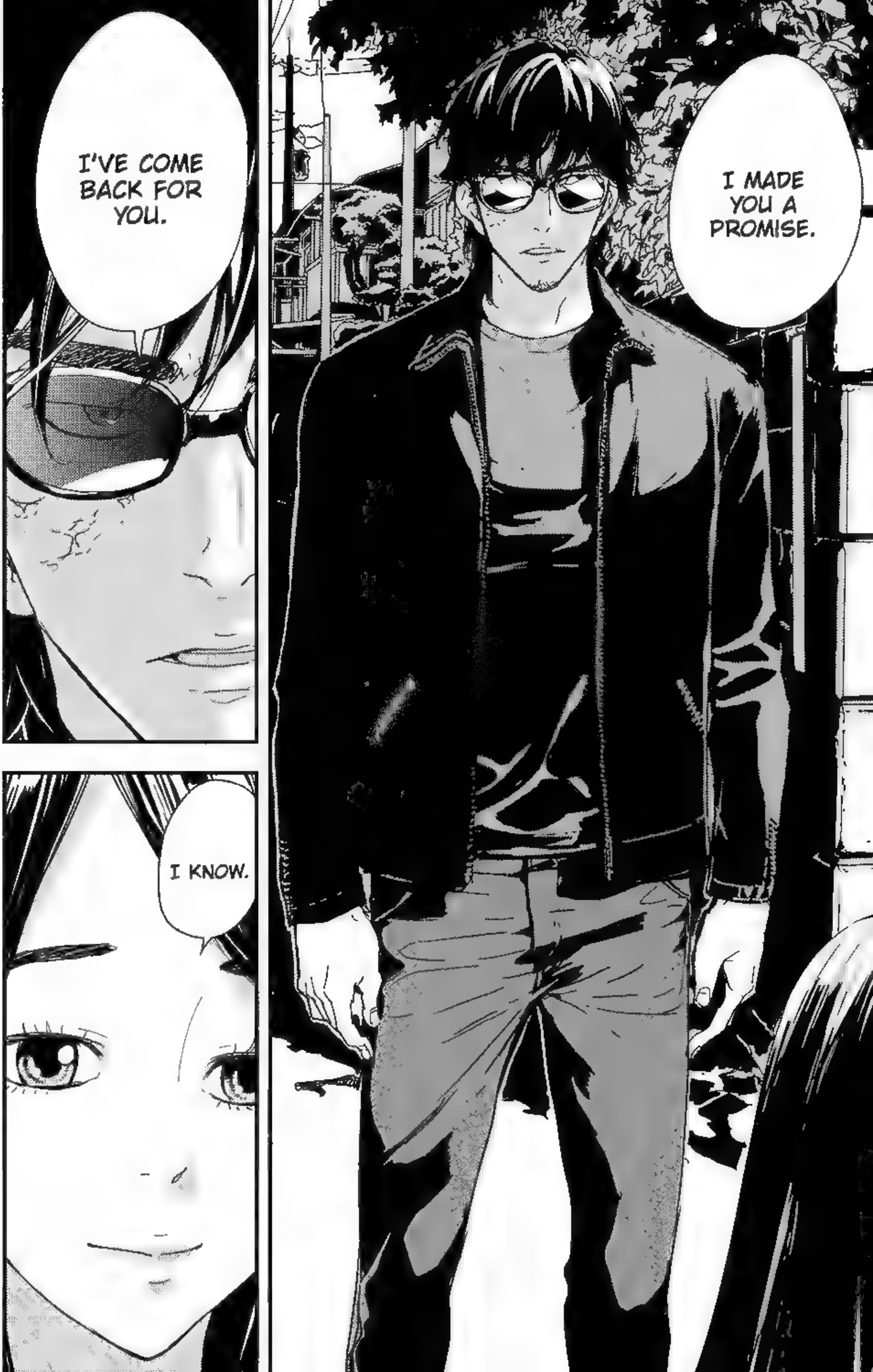

IF YOU CAN GET IT ATTACHED IN PLACE, YOU MIGHT JUST SURVIVE. YOUR LIFE OR DEATH IS UP TO YOU.
ARE YOU...
...
THAT'S YOUR FINAL PUNISHMENT FROM ME.
LET'S GO.
クル
KURU (SPIN)
HUH?
UM, OKAY...
タ
TA (TEK)
タ
TA
NEXT IS YOUR PUNISHMENT.
...OF COURSE.

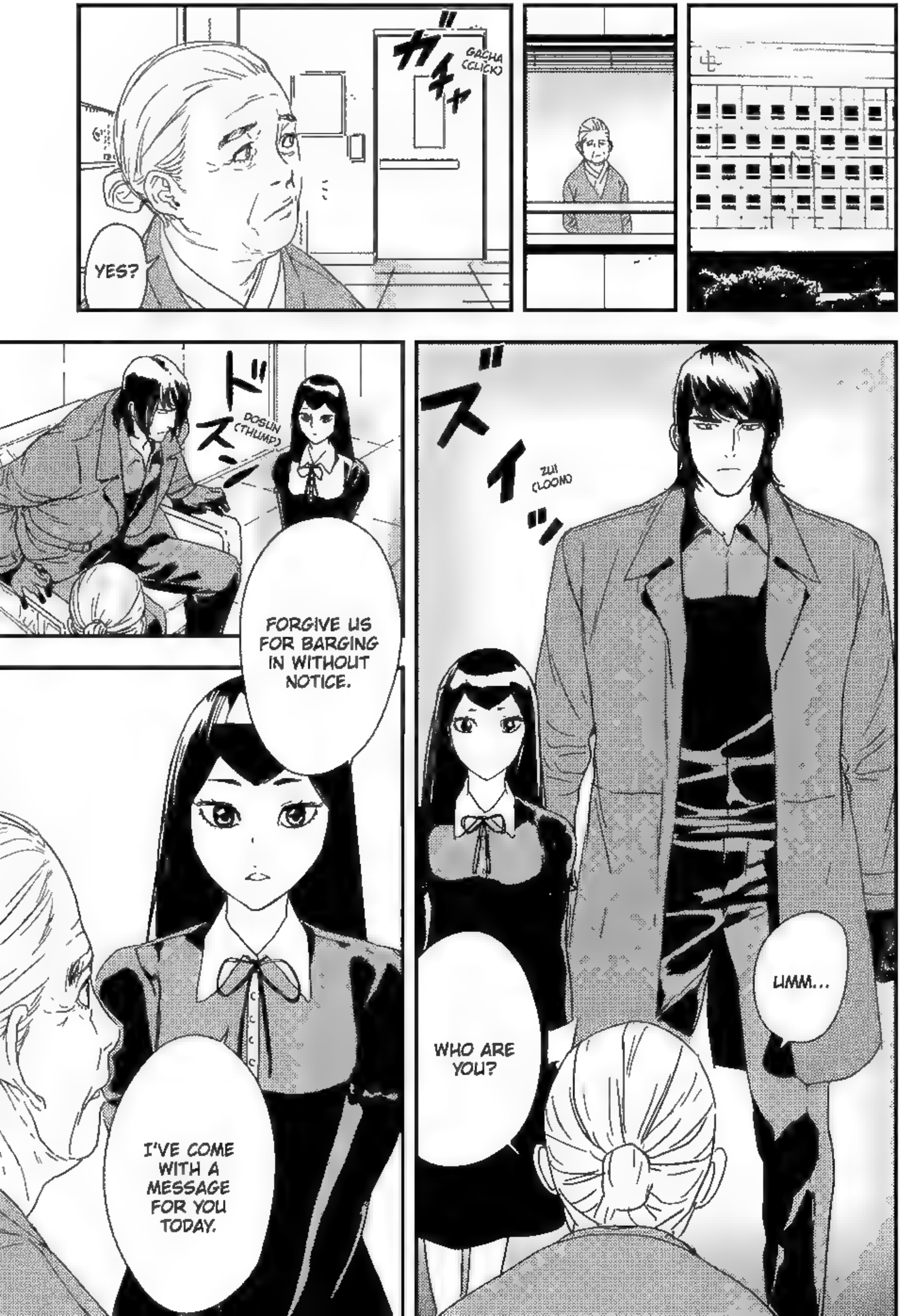

BUT...
YES?
I LOST OUR LITTLE COMPETITION. YOU WIN.
YES!
HONESTLY... I COULD DIE ANY DAY NOW, YOU GOT THAT?
IN THE END, ME, ZASHID, AND HIS BLOODLINE...
...ALL FELL VICTIM TO HARUKA TOOYAMA.

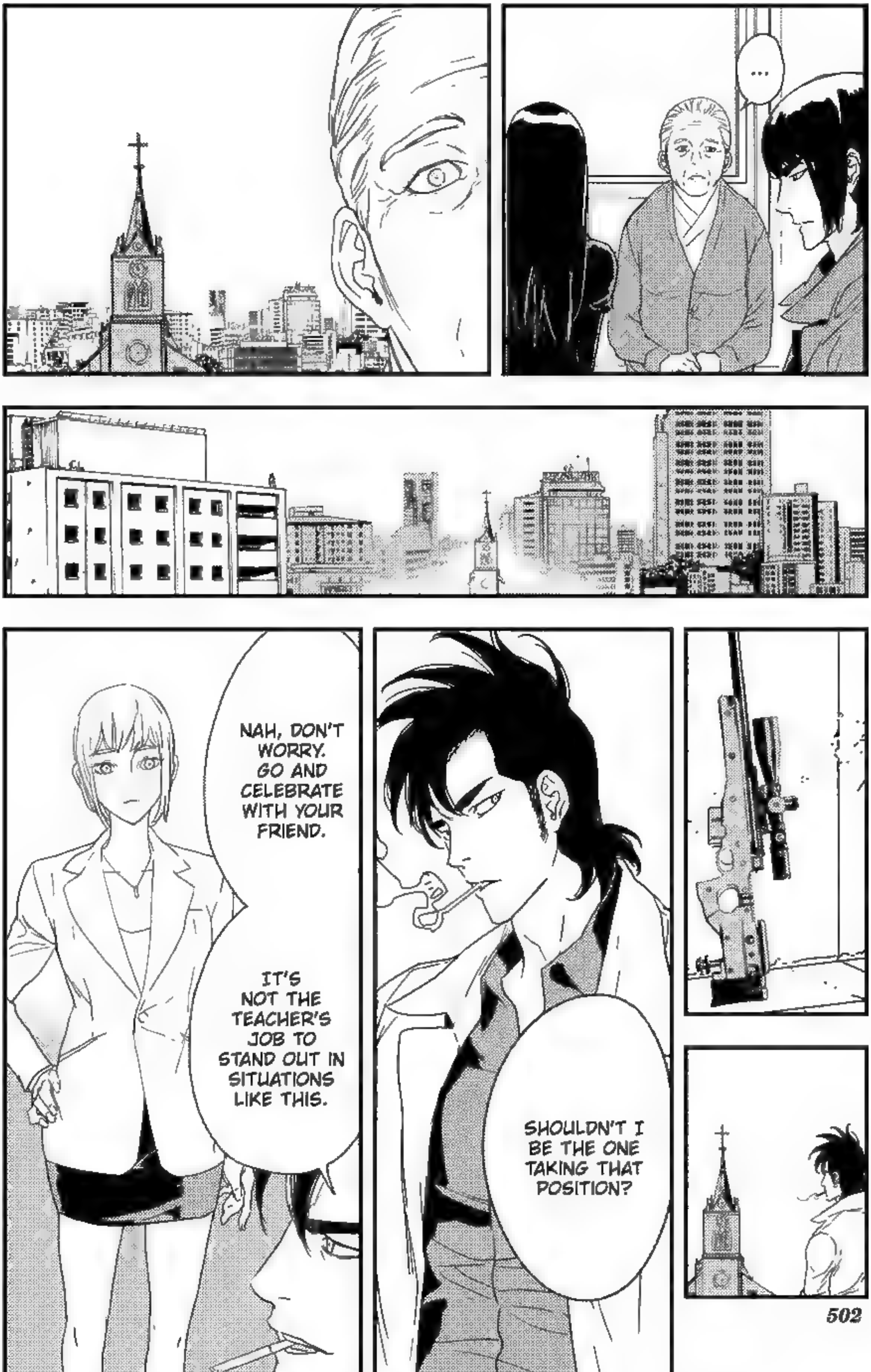

SEVEN YEARS LATER...
パパーン
PAPAAN (HONK)
ファーッ
FAAA (HWONK)
キーン コーン
KIN KON (DING-DONG)
カーン コーン
KIN KON
キャ ハッ
KIGA (CHATTER)
キャ ヤッ
KIGA
TOOYAMA!
ピタ
PITA (PAUSE)

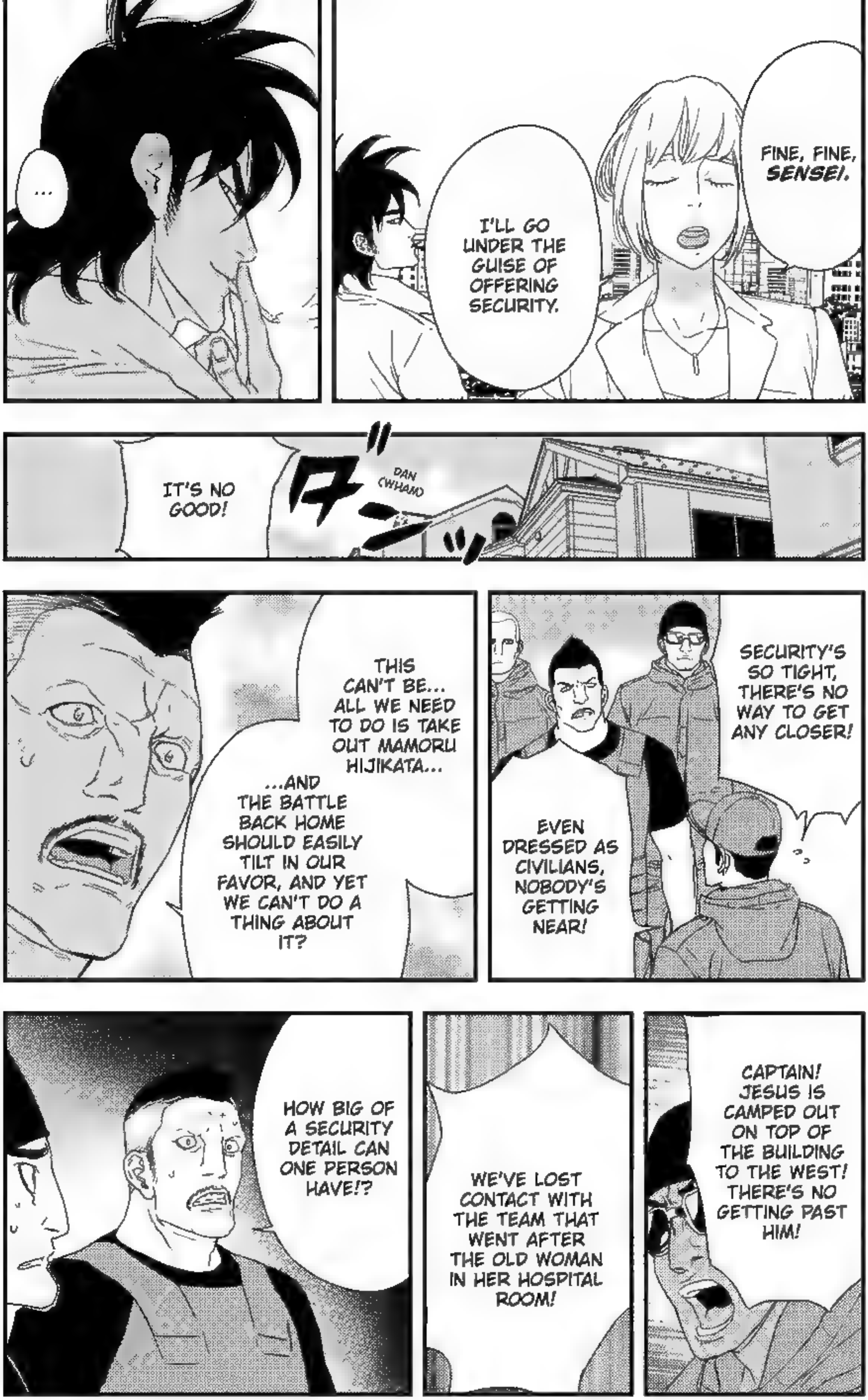

A PROMISE IS A PROMISE.

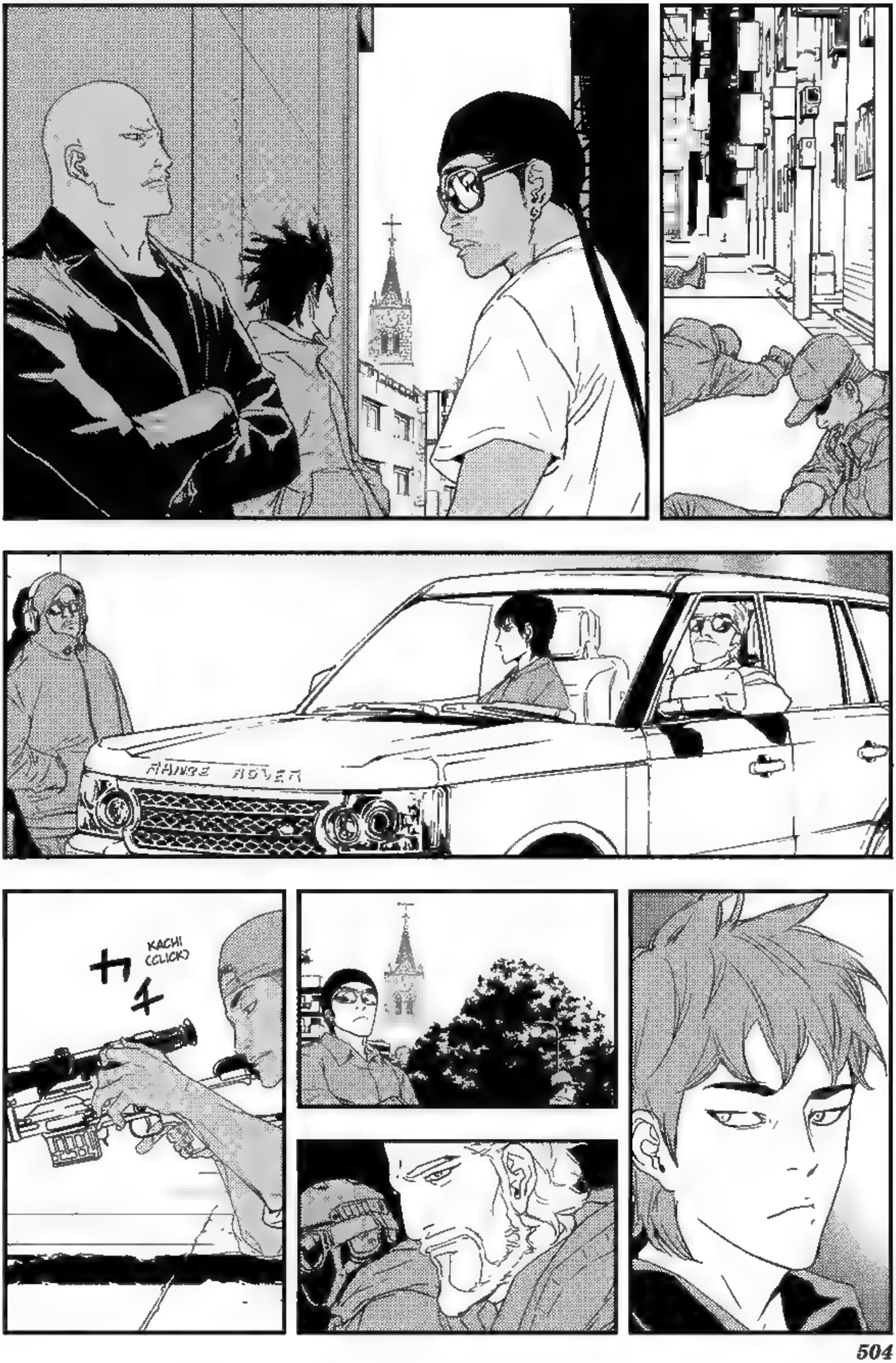

I'LL COME GET YOU WHEN YOU'RE AN ADULT. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF UNTIL THEN.
WHAAAT !?
KA (TAK)
カッ
KA
カッ
...
PITA (PAUSE)
ピタ
WELCOME BACK.

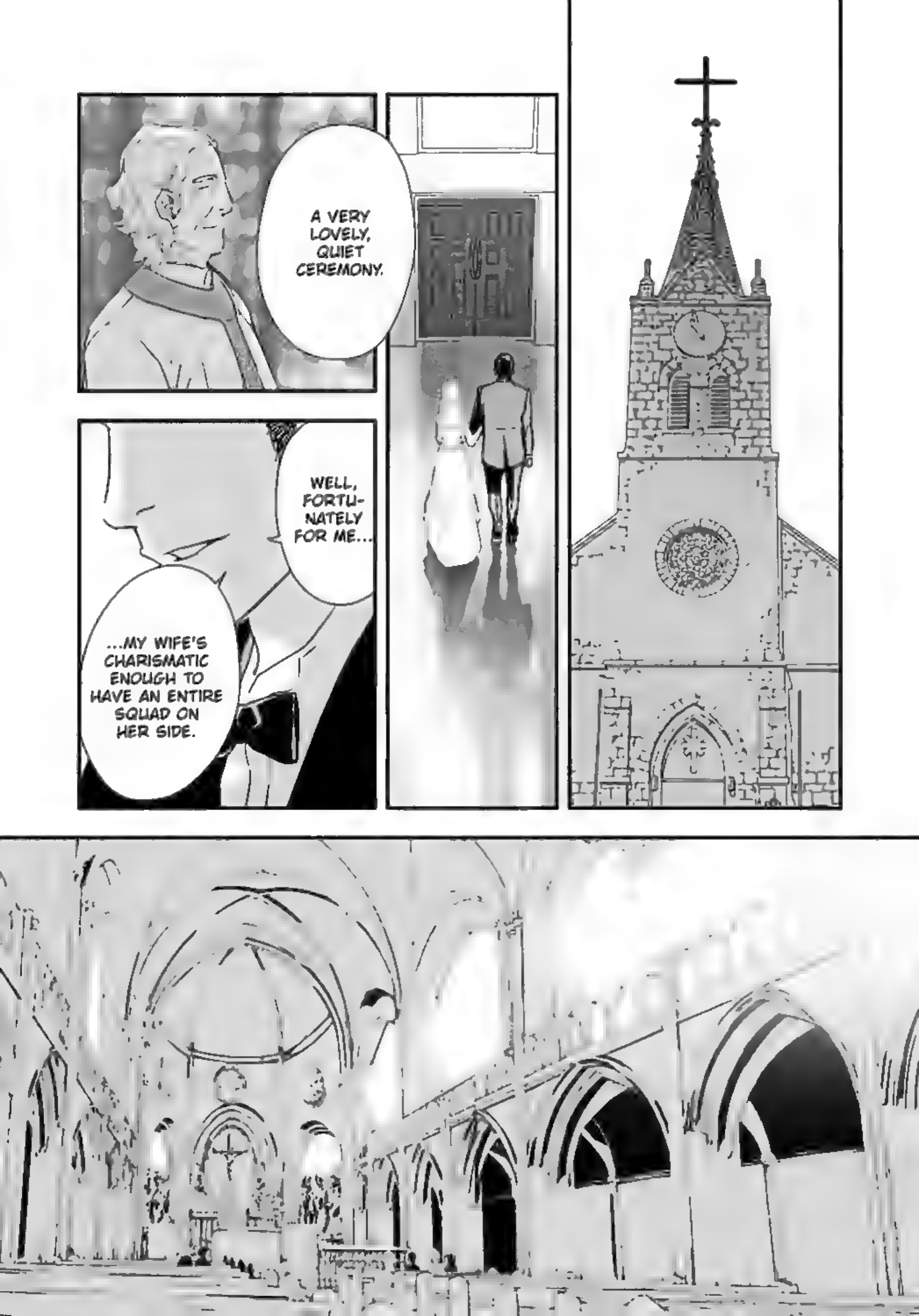

I MADE YOU A PROMISE.
I'VE COME BACK FOR YOU.
I KNOW.

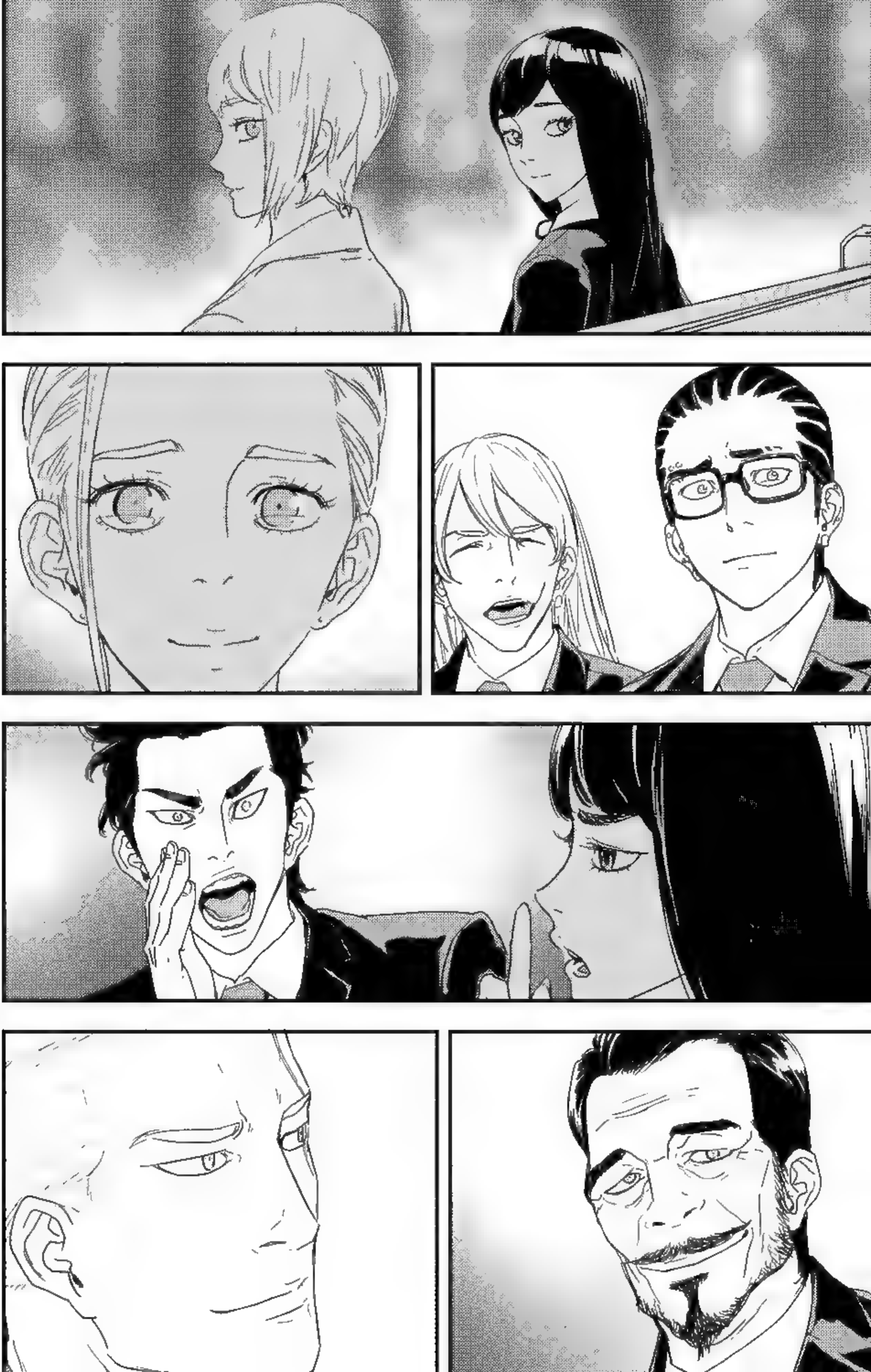

ガチャ
GACHA (CLICK)
YES?
ズイッ
ZUI (LOOM)
UMM...
WHO ARE YOU?
ドスン
DOSUN (THUMP)
FORGIVE US FOR BARGING IN WITHOUT NOTICE.
I'VE COME WITH A MESSAGE FOR YOU TODAY.

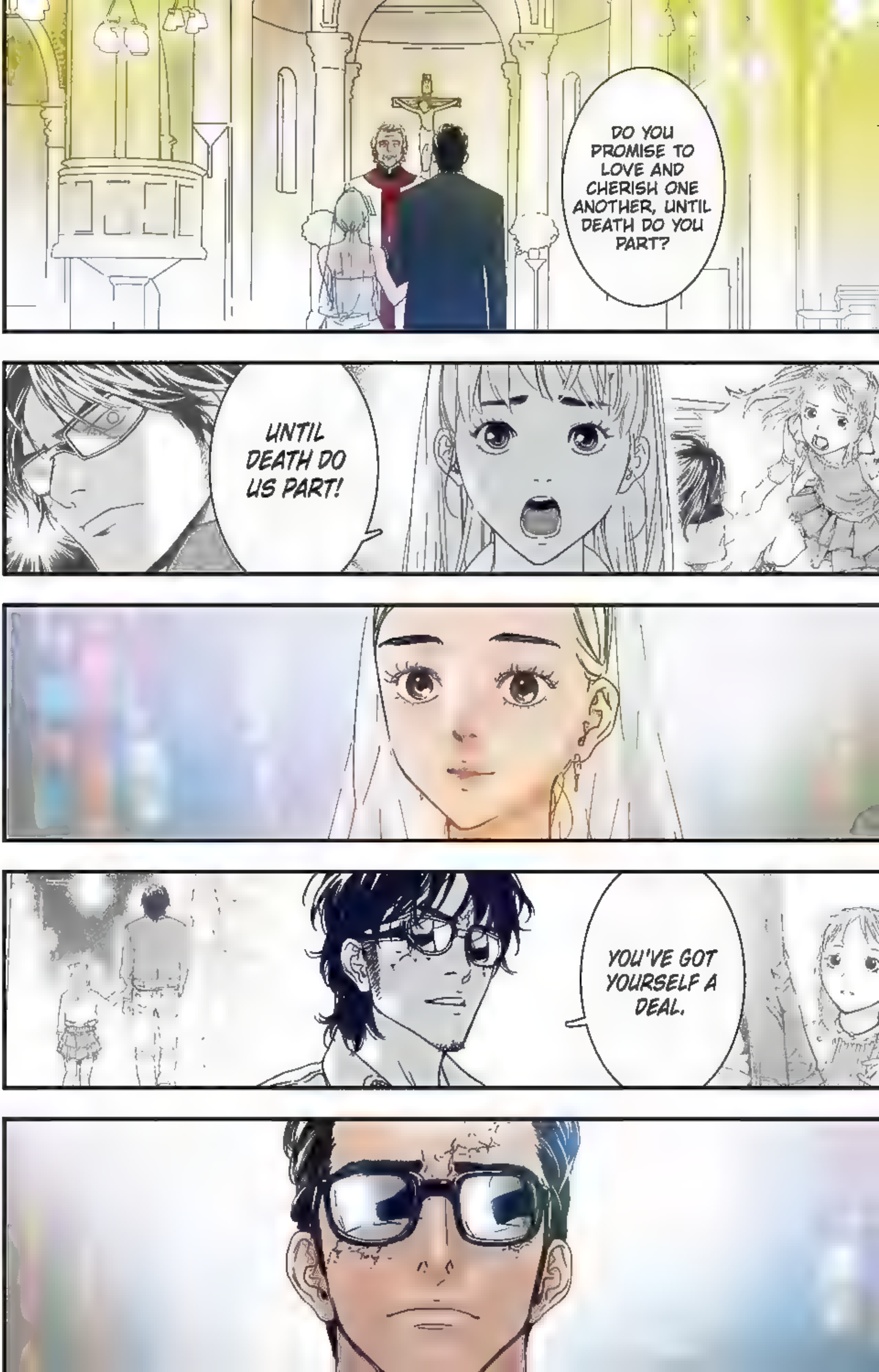

...
SHOULDN'T I BE THE ONE TAKING THAT POSITION?
NAH, DON'T WORRY. GO AND CELEBRATE WITH YOUR FRIEND.
IT'S NOT THE TEACHER'S JOB TO STAND OUT IN SITUATIONS LIKE THIS.

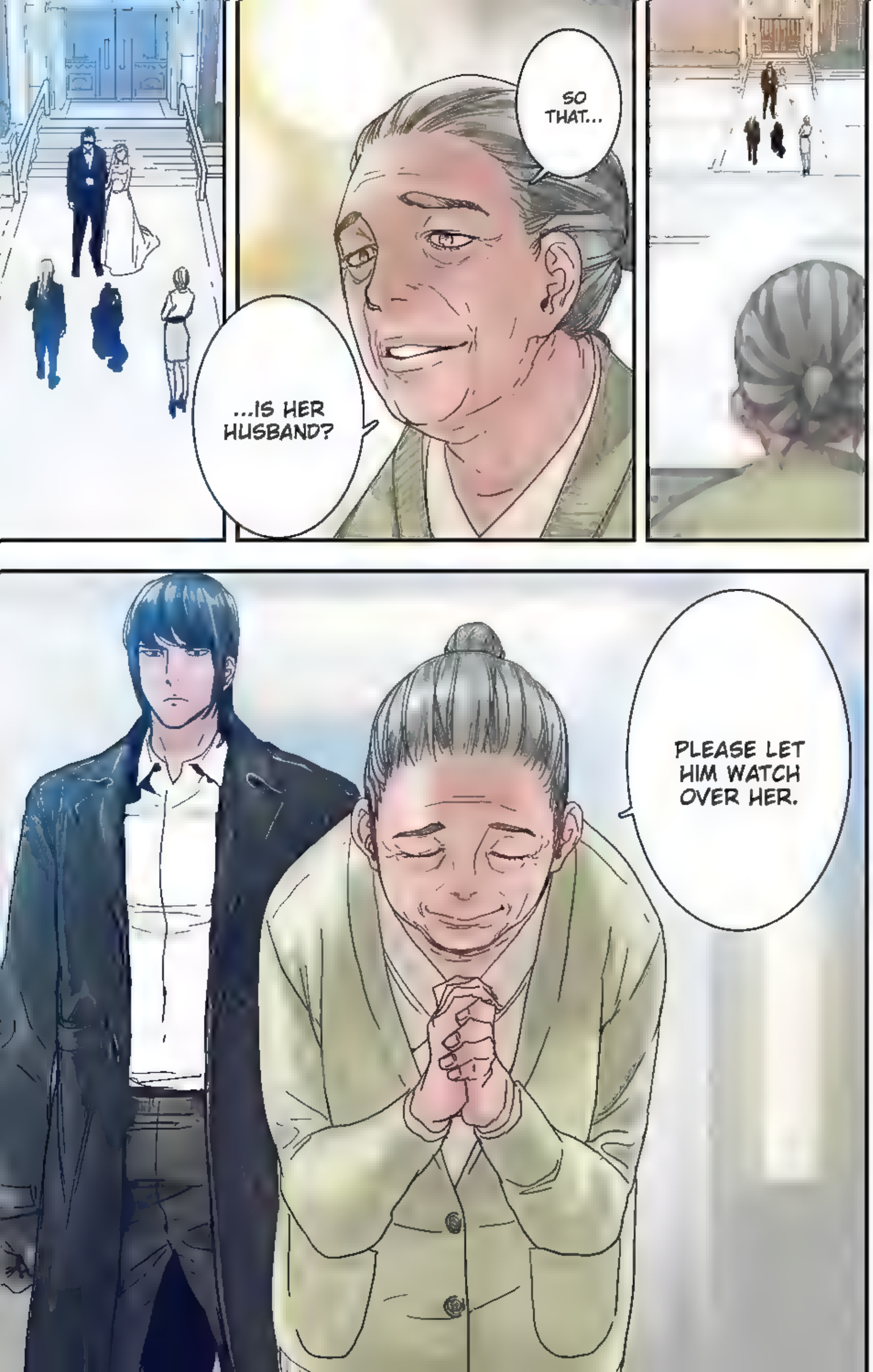

FINE, FINE, SENSEI.
I'LL GO UNDER THE GUISE OF OFFERING SECURITY.
...
DAN (WHAM)
IT'S NO GOOD!
SECURITY'S SO TIGHT, THERE'S NO WAY TO GET ANY CLOSER!
EVEN DRESSED AS CIVILIANS, NOBODY'S GETTING NEAR!
THIS CAN'T BE... ALL WE NEED TO DO IS TAKE OUT MAMORU HIJIKATA...
...AND THE BATTLE BACK HOME SHOULD EASILY TILT IN OUR FAVOR, AND YET WE CAN'T DO A THING ABOUT IT?
CAPTAIN! JESUS IS CAMPED OUT ON TOP OF THE BUILDING TO THE WEST! THERE'S NO GETTING PAST HIM!
WE'VE LOST CONTACT WITH THE TEAM THAT WENT AFTER THE OLD WOMAN IN HER HOSPITAL ROOM!
HOW BIG OF A SECURITY DETAIL CAN ONE PERSON HAVE!?


RANGE ROVER
カチ
KACHI (CLICK)

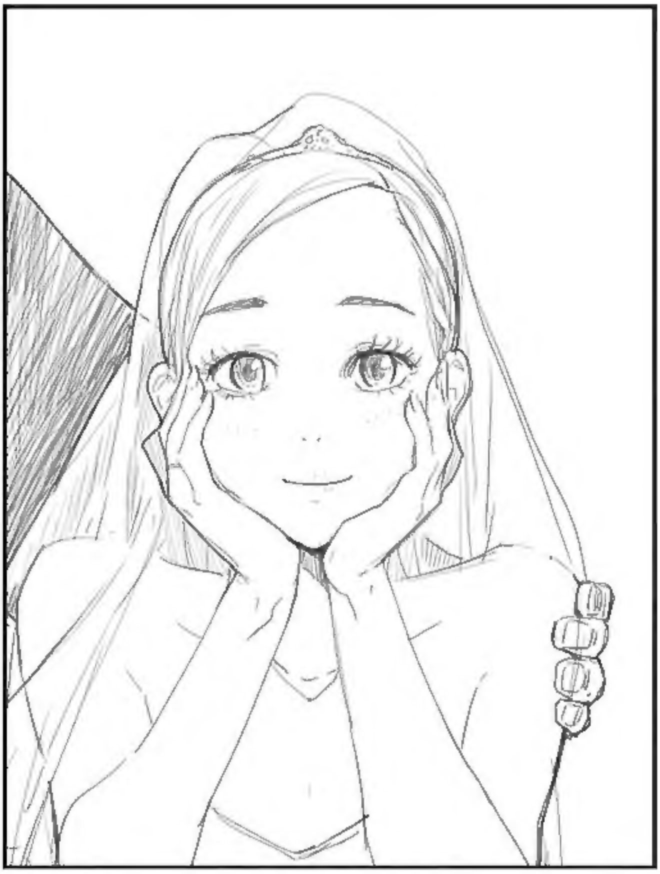

A VERY LOVELY, QUIET CEREMONY.
WELL, FORTUNATELY FOR ME...
...MY WIFE'S CHARISMATIC ENOUGH TO HAVE AN ENTIRE SQUAD ON HER SIDE.




DO YOU PROMISE TO LOVE AND CHERISH ONE ANOTHER, UNTIL DEATH DO YOU PART?
UNTIL DEATH DO US PART!
YOU'VE GOT YOURSELF A DEAL.


SO THAT...
...IS HER HUSBAND?
PLEASE LET HIM WATCH OVER HER.

until Death Do us Part – End



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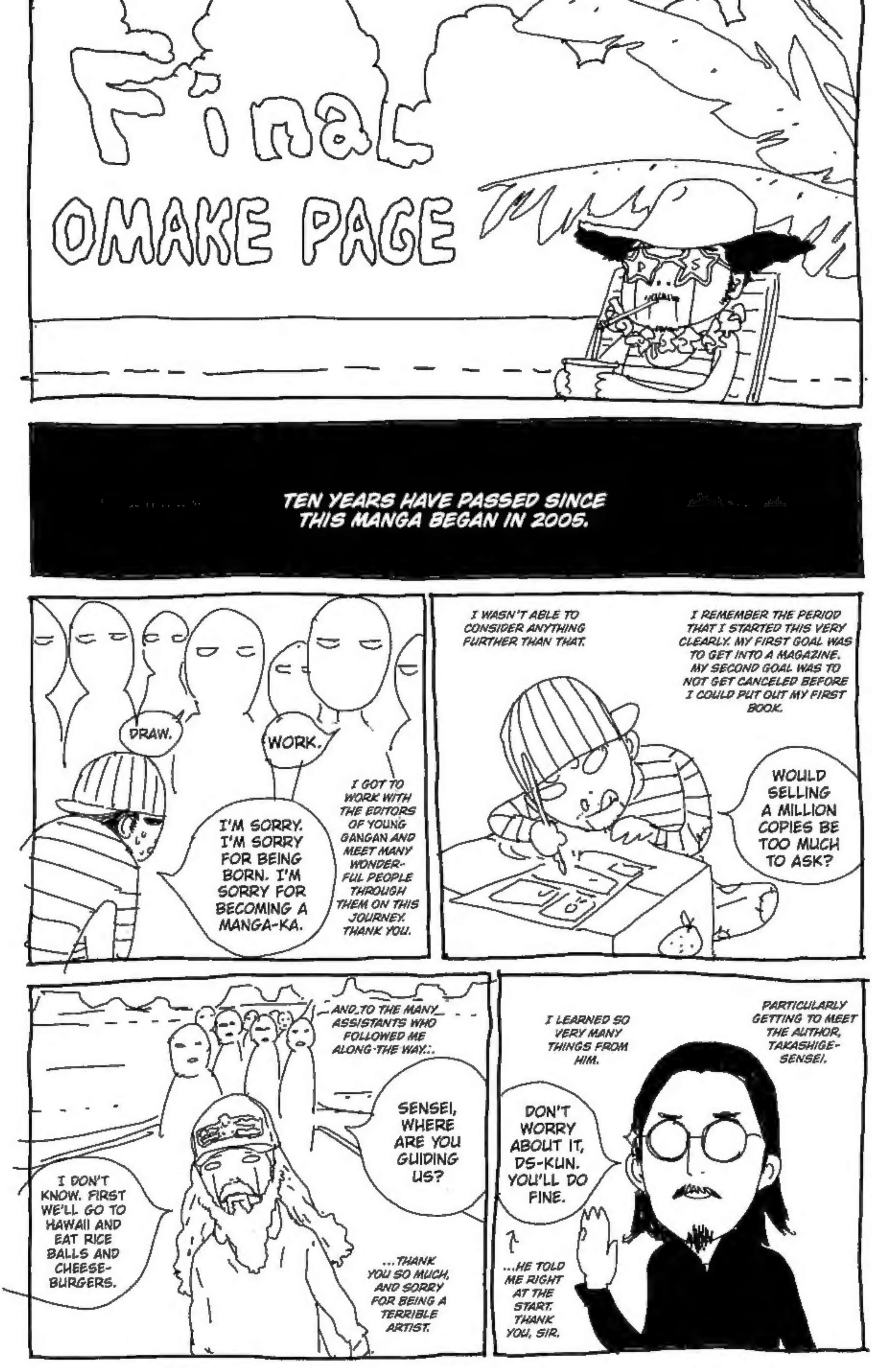
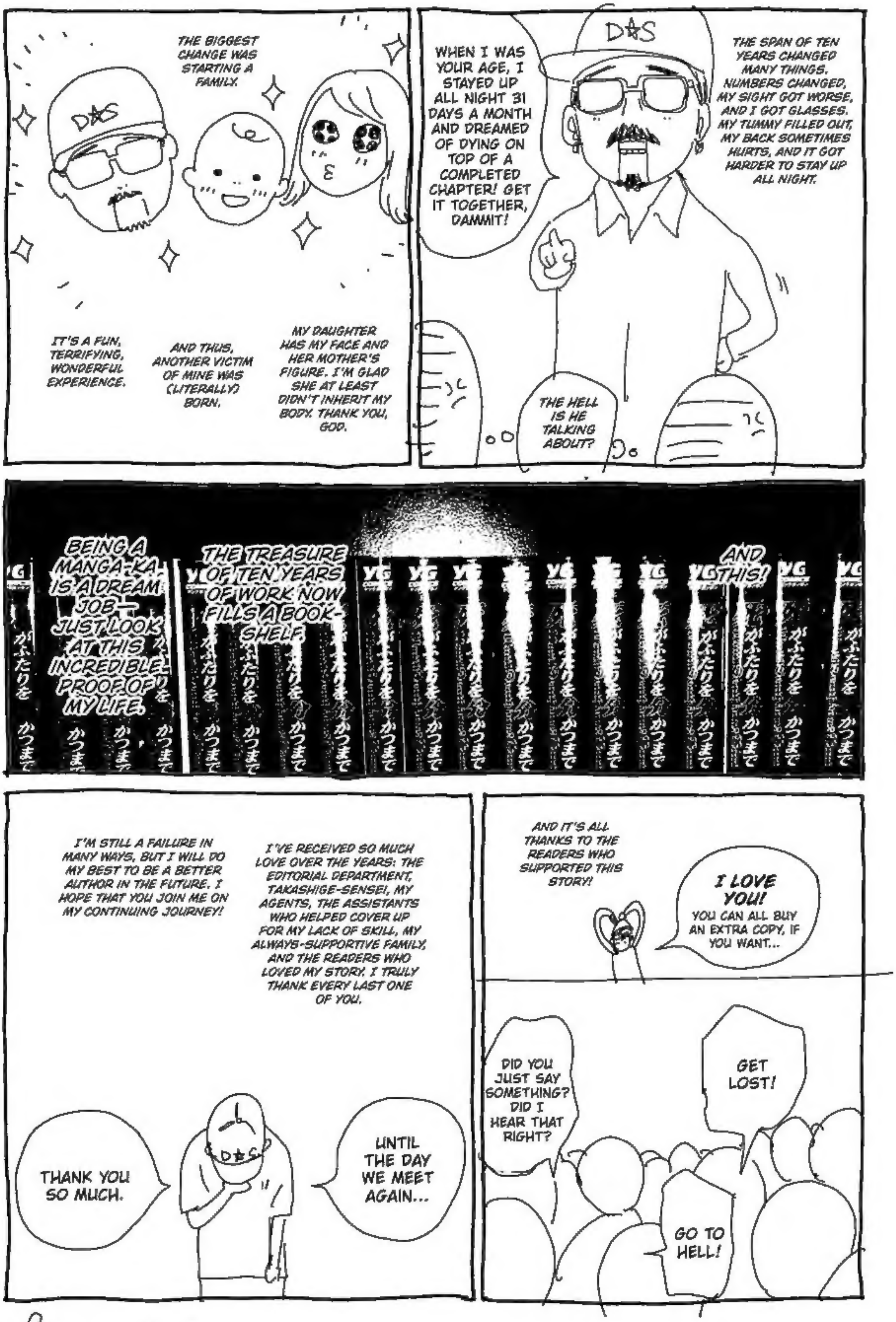

Final
OMAKE PAGE
TEN YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE THIS MANGA BEGAN IN 2005.
I REMEMBER THE PERIOD THAT I STARTED THIS VERY CLEARLY. MY FIRST GOAL WAS TO GET INTO A MAGAZINE. MY SECOND GOAL WAS TO NOT GET CANCELED BEFORE I COULD PUT OUT MY FIRST BOOK.
I WASN'T ABLE TO CONSIDER ANYTHING FURTHER THAN THAT.
WOULD SELLING A MILLION COPIES BE TOO MUCH TO ASK?
WORK.
DRAW.
I GOT TO WORK WITH THE EDITORS OF YOUNG GANGAN AND MEET MANY WONDERFUL PEOPLE THROUGH THEM ON THIS JOURNEY. THANK YOU.
I'M SORRY. I'M SORRY FOR BEING BORN. I'M SORRY FOR BECOMING A MANGA-KA.
PARTICULARLY GETTING TO MEET THE AUTHOR, TAKASHIGE-SENSEI.
I LEARNED SO VERY MANY THINGS FROM HIM.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, DS-KUN. YOU'LL DO FINE.
...HE TOLD ME RIGHT AT THE START. THANK YOU, SIR.
AND TO THE MANY ASSISTANTS WHO FOLLOWED ME ALONG THE WAY...
SENSEI, WHERE ARE YOU GUIDING US?
I DON'T KNOW. FIRST WE'LL GO TO HAWAII AND EAT RICE BALLS AND CHEESEBURGERS.
...THANK YOU SO MUCH, AND SORRY FOR BEING A TERRIBLE ARTIST.


THE SPAN OF TEN YEARS CHANGED MANY THINGS. NUMBERS CHANGED, MY SIGHT GOT WORSE, AND I GOT GLASSES. MY TUMMY FILLED OUT, MY BACK SOMETIMES HURTS, AND IT GOT HARDER TO STAY UP ALL NIGHT.
D☆S
WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE, I STAYED UP ALL NIGHT 31 DAYS A MONTH AND DREAMED OF DYING ON TOP OF A COMPLETED CHAPTER! GET IT TOGETHER, DAMMIT!
THE HELL IS HE TALKING ABOUT?
THE BIGGEST CHANGE WAS STARTING A FAMILY.
D☆S
MY DAUGHTER HAS MY FACE AND HER MOTHER'S FIGURE. I'M GLAD SHE AT LEAST DIDN'T INHERIT MY BODY. THANK YOU, GOD.
AND THUS, ANOTHER VICTIM OF MINE WAS (LITERALLY) BORN.
IT'S A FUN, TERRIFYING, WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE.
BEING A MANGA-KA IS A DREAM JOB— JUST LOOK AT THIS INCREDIBLE PROOF OF MY LIFE.
THE TREASURE OF TEN YEARS OF WORK NOW FILLS A BOOKSHELF.
AND THIS!
AND IT'S ALL THANKS TO THE READERS WHO SUPPORTED THIS STORY!
I LOVE YOU! YOU CAN ALL BUY AN EXTRA COPY, IF YOU WANT...
GET LOST!
DID YOU JUST SAY SOMETHING? DID I HEAR THAT RIGHT?
GO TO HELL!
I'VE RECEIVED SO MUCH LOVE OVER THE YEARS: THE EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT, TAKASHIGE-SENSEI, MY AGENTS, THE ASSISTANTS WHO HELPED COVER UP FOR MY LACK OF SKILL, MY ALWAYS-SUPPORTIVE FAMILY, AND THE READERS WHO LOVED MY STORY. I TRULY THANK EVERY LAST ONE OF YOU.
I'M STILL A FAILURE IN MANY WAYS, BUT I WILL DO MY BEST TO BE A BETTER AUTHOR IN THE FUTURE. I HOPE THAT YOU JOIN ME ON MY CONTINUING JOURNEY!
UNTIL THE DAY WE MEET AGAIN...
D☆S
THANK YOU SO MUCH.

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UNTIL DEATH DO US PART⑬

Hiroshi Takashige
DOUBLE-S

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Lettering: AndWorld Design

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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